CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

THURSDAY ▸ FEBRUARY 5, 2026 ▸ VOL: 11 ▸ ISSUE: 202 ▸ PAGES 12 ▸ ₹2.00

IBC WORLD NEWS
CH ABC
Certified English Daily

Donald Trump signs bill ending partial Fed shutdown P8

Govt deactivates 2.5 cr Aadhaar IDs of deceased to avoid fraud P9

P12 RCB eye second crown, DC aim to break jinx as WPL set for thrilling finale

www.ibcworldnews.com | BENGALURU ▸ HUBBALLI ▸ MANGALURU ▸ MYSURU ▸ KALABURAGI | cityhilights.news@gmail.com

Meitei-Kuki rule in restive Manipur

Y Khemchand Singh, a two-time BJP MLA belonging to Meitei community, sworn in as CM after one year of President rule while Nemcha Kipgen, a Kuki, took oath as the first women DyCM of state.

GUWAHATI

Yumnam Khemchand Singh, a two-time MLA belonging to Meitei community, took oath as new Chief Minister of Manipur on Wednesday evening, hours after nearly a year-long President's Rule was revoked in the strife-torn state.

Nemcha Kipgen, a woman Kuki BJP MLA, took oath online from Manipur Bhawan, New Delhi as Deputy CM while Naga People's Front legislator Losii Dikho took oath as another Deputy CM.

Konthoujam Govindas Singh, a veteran Meitei MLA and Khuraijam Loken Singh, another Meitei legislator, took oath as two other ministers.

Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla administered the oath of office and secrecy at Lok Bhawan at Imphal at a brief ceremony that began at 6 pm.

Earlier, Khemchand met Bhalla and staked the claim to form the government.

Govindas, an eight-time MLA, is likely to be the home minister. Kipgen is the first women DyCM and also the first from the Kuki community.

Khemchand (62), a black belt in taekwondo, took oath as the CM a day after he was elected as the leader of legislature party of BJP in Manipur, in New Delhi.

BJP National General Secretary, Tarun Chugh, the party's Northeast Co-ordinator, Sambit Patra, beside others attended the swearing-in-ceremony.

'Peace and development will serve as guiding principles of new govt'

Hours before taking oath, Khemchand posted on social media,"....I am confident that, with the formation of the new Council of Ministers, peace and development will serve as the guiding principles of the new government. The political journey towards the vision of #ViksitBharatViksit and Viksit Manipur is not without challenges, but our priorities will remain firmly aligned with achieving these ambitious goals. I extend my sincere gratitude to all for the trust, responsibility, and honour bestowed upon me." Notably, the BJP legislature party of Manipur had on Tuesday elected Y Khemchand Singh as its leader at a meeting held at the party headquarters in New Delhi.

The meeting was attended by 35 of the 37 BJP MLAs, besides the party's central observer Tarun Chugh, its northeast in-charge Sambit Patra, and BJP state president A Sharda Devi, among others.

REVOCATION OF PREZ RULE CLEARED
DECKS FOR NEW GOVT FORMATION

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued a notification earlier in the day announcing that President Droupadi Murmu has revoked the President's Rule in Manipur with immediate effect. According to a proclamation published in the Gazette of India (Extraordinary), President Murmu revoked the earlier order imposed under Article 356(2) of the Constitution. The original proclamation had been issued on February 13, 2025, it said, adding that the latest notification, signed by the President on Wednesday (February 4, 2026), formally ends President's Rule in the state. "In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (2) of Article 356 of the Constitution, I, Droupadi Murmu, President of India, hereby revoke the Proclamation issued by me under the said article on the 13th day of February, 2025, in relation to the State of Manipur, with effect from the 4th day of February, 2026," the proclamation read.

The revocation cleared the decks for the formation of a new government led by the BJP. The state's BJP legislators, who met in New Delhi on Tuesday, elected Singh as the BJP legislature party leader.

Leadership change follows N Biren Singh's resignation amid ethnic violence

Restive Manipur has been witnessing ethnic violence since May 3, 2023, after a tribal solidarity march was taken out in the hill districts, in protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Since then, at least 260 people, including members of both the Kuki and Meitei communities as well as security personnel, have been killed in the the Meitei-Kuki conflict, while 60,000 others become homeless. The President's Rule was promulgated on February 13 last year, days after N Biren Singh resigned as the chief minister.

Singh: RSS veteran, former speaker, Taekwondo black belt

- Two-time BJP legislator Yumnam Khemchand Singh, who was sworn in as the Manipur CM, is a long-time RSS functionary and an organisation-focused leader who has held key constitutional and ministerial positions in the state.
- Apart from politics, he has had a long association with Taekwondo. A black belt holder, he is a former vice-president of the Taekwondo Federation of India and has been involved in the promotion of the sport in the Northeast.
- Though Singh has been in politics for decades, the 62-year-old leader made his debut in the Assembly in 2017 from Singjamei constituency in Imphal West district.
- Singh was elected Speaker of the Assembly, a position he held during the first Biren Singh-led BJP government in the state.
- In 2022, he was inducted into the second Biren Singh ministry as a Cabinet Minister and held key portfolios, including municipal administration, housing and urban development (MAHUD), rural development and panchayati raj, and education departments.
- He served in the Cabinet till February 2025, when President's rule was imposed in the state, days after N Biren Singh resigned as the chief minister amid criticisms of his government's handling of the ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kukis, which broke out in May 2023.
- Khemchand Singh first contested in the 2012 Assembly polls on an All India Trinamool Congress ticket, but lost to a Congress candidate. He formally joined the BJP in 2013.
- Born at Singjamei Yumnam Leikai, he completed his High School Leaving Certificate in 1978 from Ram Lal Paul High School in Imphal. He is married and has a son.

'Justice crying': Mamata rips into EC in SC

NEW DELHI

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that she has written several times to the Election Commission on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and remarked, "justice is crying behind the door". Banerjee appeared in-person before the apex court during the hearing of her plea against the SIR exercise in West Bengal.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi was hearing a batch of petitions, including those filed by Banerjee, Mostari Banu and TMC MPs Derek O'Brien and Dola Sen, challenging the SIR of electoral rolls in her state.

Calling the Election Commission as "WhatsApp Commission", she alleged that the poll body was not allowing government documents for SIR.

"SIR process is only for deletion. Mismatch not only in title, sir…unplanned…suppose daughter after marriage goes to in-laws house…why she is using husband's title…that is also a mismatch," the CM said.

She said that SIR is being held in West Bengal, not Assam, where elections are due later this year, while appealing to the CJI to "save democracy" and protect "people's rights".

"They targeted only Bengal, which is on the cusp of an election," she told the bench.

As Banerjee continued to put forth her arguments, the CJI asked her to argue through her lawyer.

Meanwhile, the poll body told the Supreme Court that the West Bengal government was not cooperating with the SIR process.

SC issues notice to EC

The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued notice in the plea filed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee challenging the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the State. The Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V M Pancholi told the Election Commission of India (ECI) to take care while sending notices to voters on the basis of name mismatches. The court will hear the matter next on Monday, February 9.

'Next 20-25 years will be era of India'

MUMBAI: BlackRock's CEO, Larry Fink, has forecasted an economic renaissance for India over the next two decades, describing it as the 'Era of India.' Speaking alongside billionaire Mukesh Ambani, Fink outlined a vision where India is set to achieve consistent growth rates between 8-10% annually. He emphasized that long-term domestic investment will be pivotal in propelling India's economy, minimizing the need for foreign capital reliance. He noted that the fundamental strength of any nation begins with a solid domestic economy supported by robust retirement savings.

Praising the Indian government's initiatives, particularly the digitised rupee's impact on commerce, Fink expressed concern over other nations, including the US, falling behind. He urged an investment mindset focused on long-term gains, aligning with the trajectory of India's economic growth.

LS tumult: Women MPs surround PM's seat

NEW DELHI

The ruckus in the Lok Sabha that led to the cancellation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reply to the Vote of Thanks following the President's address, had started early on Wednesday.

The Opposition has been on the warpath since Rahul Gandhi was not allowed to quote from the unpublished memoirs of former Army chief MM Naravane.

There were several adjournments and as soon as the House proceedings started at 5 pm -- shortly before PM Modi was expected to speak -- some women MPs from the Opposition, including Varsha Gaikwad and Jyotimani, blocked the chairs of seats of the ruling party, including the seat of PM Modi. They held a large banner that read, "Do what is right". Their protest was over the suspension of eight Opposition MPs.

Sandhya Rai, who was filling in for the Speaker, then adjourned the proceedings. The women MPs ended their blockade only after several ministers urged them to leave.

The BJP's Manoj Tiwari later claimed the women MPs meant to attack PM Modi. "Whatever happened was extremely scary. It only shows the level of the Congress's desperation. The women MPs were stationed around the Prime Minister's seat in a pre-planned manner. It was only through Kiren Rijiju's quick thinking that the situation could be brought under control," he told reporters.

'Traitor' vs 'Sadak ka gunda'
Rahul-Bittu lock horns outside Parliament

NEW DELHI

A sharp exchange of words between Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Minister of State for Railways Ravneet Singh Bittu escalated into a political controversy on Wednesday, prompting BJP-led Sikh groups to protest outside the Congress office in the city.

The confrontation took place near Parliament's "Makar Dwar", where Congress MPs were protesting the suspension of eight Opposition MPs from the Lok Sabha the previous day. As Bittu was walking past the protesting MPs, Gandhi remarked, "Here is a traitor"—referring to Bittu's switch from the Congress to the BJP ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls—adding, "Look at the face." Extending his hand for a handshake, Gandhi said, "Hello brother, my traitor friend. Don't worry, you will come back (to the Congress)."

To this, Bittu responded by calling Gandhi "Desh ka dushman". Speaking to the media later, Bittu said. "They behaved like a 'sadak ka gunda' (street thug). He (Rahul Gandhi) did the same thing even inside the House; the Speaker sent them out."

Centre 'attempting to silence' Rahul Gandhi: CM

Bengaluru: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday accused the central government of "attempting to silence" the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, saying it strikes at the heart of India's democracy. He was referring to Rahul Gandhi being disallowed from quoting an article that cited an unpublished memoir of former Army chief M M Naravane on the 2020 India-China conflict in the Lok Sabha.

2 Jaish terrorists killed in Jammu encounter

JAMMU

Two Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorists, who were spotted in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur on Tuesday, have been killed in an encounter by the Indian Army.

In a precision strike, security forces blasted a cave hideout in Udhampur's Basantgarh area, killing two JeM terrorists, including their top commander, Maavi, from Pakistan.

The operation codenamed 'Kiya' was launched on February 3 after a specific intel input from the Jammu and Kashmir Police about the presence of Jaish terrorists in that area.

Sniffer dogs with cameras mounted on them were pressed into service to detect the terrorists' presence, with intermittent firing continuing through the night.

Korean game addiction drives 3 girls to death

GHAZIABAD

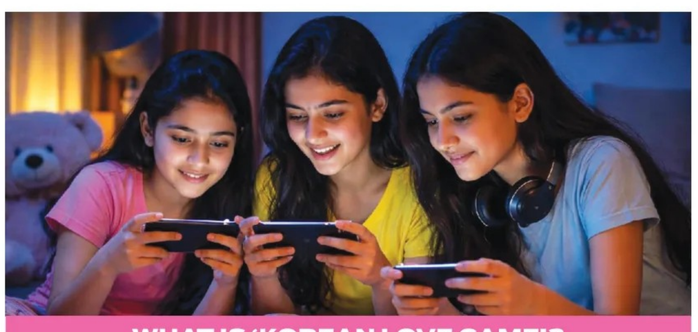
A chilling picture has emerged in the tragic deaths of three minor sisters who plunged from the ninth floor of their apartment building in Ghaziabad in the early hours of Wednesday, with investigators linking the incident to an extreme obsession with Korean culture and an alleged task-based online "Korean love game".

The sisters — Pakhi (12), Prachi (14) and Vishika (16) — jumped around 2.15 am after leaving behind a handwritten note that read simply: "Sorry, Papa."

Police said the girls quietly left their bedroom in the dead of night, went to the balcony area, bolted the door from inside and climbed out of a window one after the other, according to Indian media reports. Their screams and the sound of bodies hitting the ground jolted their parents, neighbours and security guards awake at the Bharat City housing complex.

By the time their parents broke open the balcony door, it was too late. "When we reached the spot, we confirmed that three girls, daughters of Chetan Kumar, had died after jumping from the building," said Assistant Commissioner of Police Atul Kumar Singh.

Investigators recovered a handwritten suicide note along with an eight-page diary that detailed the sisters' mobile phone use and their intense fascination with everything Korean, including online games, movies and music.



WHAT IS 'KOREAN LOVE GAME'?

Sources close to the Ghaziabad investigation said the 'game' begins with an unknown person initiating a conversation with a child on social media or through certain mobile apps. This person claims to be a Korean or, at the very least, a foreign national, and talks about friendship and love. After this, after a measure of trust has been established, the children are assigned tasks, starting with simple challenges like getting up in the middle of the night. Over time these become more difficult and demanding, and the 'game master' threatens the children if they don't follow orders. The 'challenges' run for 50 consecutive days, source said. The 50th 'challenge' is reportedly to commit suicide.

AILING HEALTHCARE

Govt docs flag drug crunch in state hospitals

BENGALURU

A health emergency seems to be looming in the state as government hospitals are facing an acute shortage of medicines, according to the Karnataka Government Medical Officers' Association. The association has issued a media statement claiming that medicines are not being supplied to government hospitals on time.

The shortage is severe, with essential medicines like IV fluids, antibiotics and other emergency drugs in short supply. This is making it challenging for patients to receive proper treatment. Despite repeated requests and meetings with health officials, the situation hasn't improved, the association said.

The association has expressed frustration, saying that the health department's flaws are exacerbating the problem. Many health institutions lack funds, despite government allocations for medicine procurement. The issue has been brought to the attention of health ministers, but no serious action has been taken, the association claimed.

The association has urged the health authorities to address the medicine shortage and resolve the issues plating the healthcare system.

QUICK READ

Christians targeted on religious grounds: Archbishop

BENGALURU

Archbishop Peter Machado has expressed concern over attacks on Christians, stating that members of the community are being targeted purely on religious grounds, creating fear and insecurity. He said such incidents are often attributed to "fringe groups" and stressed that if this is the case, those elements must be clearly condemned and brought under control. The Archbishop said he has personally raised the issue with the Prime Minister on several occasions, including during his recent participation in Christmas celebrations. Emphasising that the Church's concern is not political, he called for concrete action to ensure the safety and confidence of the Christian community.

Case filed against 22 two-wheeler riders for wheeling

BENGALURU

Police have registered cases against 22 two-wheeler riders for performing dangerous wheeling stunts on city roads. The action followed a special operation conducted after authorities noticed youths indulging in such risky riding. According to a press release from the Police Commissioner, 67 temporary checkpoints were set up across Bengaluru as part of intensified enforcement. During the drive, vehicles of the offenders were impounded and cases booked. The riders were later fined in court, and their two-wheelers have been kept at traffic police stations as a deterrent against reckless driving.

Two killed in separate road accidents

BENGALURU

Two persons were killed in separate road accidents within city police limits on Wednesday morning. Sanju (50) died after a car rammed into his motorcycle at Harappanahalli under the Jigani police station limits. In another incident, Kumar (48) lost his life when an autorickshaw collided with his motorcycle on BTS Road in the Wilson Garden police station area. Police said the drivers of both the car and the autorickshaw have been detained for questioning. Separate cases have been registered, and the Wilson Garden and Jigani police are investigating the circumstances leading to the accidents.

2nd train arrives for Metro Pink Line, trial runs to begin soon

Arrival of the second metro train boosts Pink Line readiness ahead of trials

BENGALURU

Bengaluru's much-awaited Pink Line metro corridor moved a step closer to operation with the arrival of its second train at the Kothanur depot, officials of the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) said. The induction of the new rake marks a crucial phase in preparations for trial runs on the elevated section of the corridor.

The Pink Line, planned as a 21.26-km corridor with both elevated and underground stretches, is expected to play a key role in improving east-west connectivity across the city. In the first phase, BMRCL is focusing on the 7.5-km elevated stretch between Kalena Agrahara and Tavarekere, which includes six stations. Trial runs on this section are expected to begin shortly.

Officials said the arrival of the second train will allow BMRCL to proceed with train coupling, signalling integration and detailed track testing. These tests are mandatory to assess braking systems, acceleration, safety mechanisms and overall operational reliability before passenger services can be launched.

If testing and statutory safety inspections progress as planned, BMRCL is aiming to open the elevated stretch to the public by April. Once operational, the line is expected to significantly reduce travel time for commuters in south Bengaluru and ease congestion on key arterial roads.

Work is simultaneously progressing on the remaining 13.76 km underground section of the Pink Line. Construction activities, including tunnelling and station works, are currently underway at multiple locations. Officials reiterated that efforts are being made to complete the underground portion within the year.

Upon completion, the full Pink Line will offer seamless connectivity across the corridor, integrating with other metro lines and strengthening the overall network. With each new train arrival, BMRCL said the project is steadily moving closer to commercial operations, raising expectations among daily commuters waiting for improved public transport options.

'Allegations can't be accepted unless proved': HM on RB Timmapur

BENGALURU

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Wednesday rejected the corruption allegations levelled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) against Excise Minister RB Timmapur, asserting that accusations cannot be accepted unless they are backed by proof. His remarks came amid continued protests by the BJP inside the Vidhana Soudha, demanding Timmapur's resignation.

Speaking to reporters, Parameshwara said the allegations made by the opposition were yet to be substantiated. "It is only an allegation. Allegations can't be accepted unless proved. Evidence is what matters," he said. He also noted that the government is seeking to pass a resolution in the Assembly opposing the VB-G-RAM-G Act.

Excise Minister RB Timmapur, responding to calls for his resignation, maintained that there was no evidence to support the charges against him. "There is no evidence. Therefore, I will not resign," he said firmly, dismissing the BJP's demands as politically motivated. The Congress leadership rallied behind Timmapur, with Minister Priyank Kharge strongly criticising the BJP for what he termed a lack of credible proof. Kharge accused the opposition of "playing to the gallery" and challenged BJP leaders to produce concrete evidence. "If they can show even one shred of evidence, we are willing to take responsibility," he said, adding that repeated allegations without proof only weakened democratic discourse. Meanwhile, BJP legislators intensified their agitation against the Congress government, continuing an overnight protest inside the Vidhana Soudha. Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka, along with several party MLAs, spent the night within the Assembly premises as part of their sit-in, which entered its second day on Wednesday.

Ashoka alleged large-scale corruption in the Excise Department and claimed that the BJP had submitted evidence to support its charges. "There are audios and videos. I have provided all the evidence in the Assembly. This is the biggest loot in Karnataka," he told reporters, vowing to continue the protest until the minister steps down. The agitation also found support from the Janata Dal (Secular), with JD(S) leader CB Suresh Babu joining the chorus against the government. He accused the Congress of indecision and said the opposition had been consistently demanding Timmapur's resignation over the past two days.

HC slams Wipro over ex-gratia dispute, calls defence abuse of law

BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has imposed costs of ₹50,000 on Wipro Enterprises Private Limited, holding that the company's stand in a dispute over payment of ex-gratia to a former employee amounted to an abuse of the process of law. The amount is to be paid to the employee, who had successfully sued the company before a civil court.

The dispute relates to the non-payment of an ex-gratia amount promised to Ratnesh Pandey, a resident of Faridabad in Haryana, who resigned from Wipro in September 2017 after nearly 12 years of service. Pandey had joined the company as a territory manager and served in various positions during his tenure.

Pandey tendered his resignation on August 6, 2017, which was accepted on September 18, 2017. In recognition of his contribution, Wipro offered him an ex-gratia lump sum of ₹6.32 lakh, payable after 18 months from the date of cessation of employment. The payment was subject to the condition that Pandey would not join competing companies, including Philips India Limited and Bajaj Electricals Ltd, after leaving Wipro.

When the ex-gratia amount was not paid even after the stipulated 18-month period and despite repeated correspondence, Pandey approached a civil court seeking payment along with 18% interest. Wipro contested the claim, arguing that Pandey had not accepted the terms and conditions mentioned in the cessation letter and was therefore not entitled to the ex-gratia amount.

On July 23, 2024, the 20th Additional City Civil Judge ruled in favour of Pandey. Challenging the verdict, Wipro filed an appeal, contending that the cessation letter dated September 18, 2017, stood revoked under Section 6(2) of the Indian Contract Act, 1872, due to the absence of acceptance by Pandey, and that any acceptance after 18 months was invalid.

Pandey countered by pointing out that Wipro had never alleged any breach of contract conditions before the civil court. Justice Sachin Shankar Magadum, while dismissing the appeal, noted that August 19, 2017, was Pandey's last working day and rejected Wipro's contention that signing and returning the cessation letter was a mandatory condition.

The court held that the phrase "return to us for records" in the letter could not be treated as a condition precedent. It observed that Wipro had acted upon the cessation letter and, having failed to establish any breach by Pandey, could not deny payment on hyper-technical grounds. Such a defence, the court said, violated Sections 7 and 8 of the Indian Contract Act and amounted to vexatious resistance to an admitted liability, warranting the imposition of costs.

800-metre flyover proposed to ease congestion at Iblur Junction

BENGALURU

Commuters using Bengaluru's busy Outer Ring Road (ORR) may soon get relief from chronic traffic snarls at Iblur Junction, with the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) proposing an 800-metre-long flyover between HSR Layout and Bellandur. Once built, the structure is expected to help motorists bypass the heavily congested junction and cut travel time by 10–15 minutes during peak hours.

Currently, a flyover from Kadubeesanahalli towards Silk Board allows signal-free movement for vehicles heading in that direction, enabling traffic to skip the Iblur signal. However, a parallel flyover for vehicles moving from Silk Board towards Marathahalli — which was originally planned along with the existing structure — was never constructed. The missing link has turned Iblur Junction into one of the worst traffic bottlenecks on the ORR.

In the absence of a grade separator from Agara towards Marathahalli, vehicles from Sarjapur Road, Koramangala, Silk Board and the ORR converge at the Iblur signal, resulting in frequent traffic pile-ups.

Cancer care must go beyond treatment: Doctor says early pain relief is crucial

BENGALURU

On World Cancer Day 2026, under the theme 'United by Unique', medical experts emphasised that cancer care should extend beyond treatment to include effective pain management, which is crucial for every patient.

According to India's National Cancer Registry Programme, over 14 lakh new cancer cases were reported in 2023. Many patients with advanced cancer experience moderate to severe pain, yet a significant number remain undertreated.

Dr. Radheshyam Naik, Consultant Medical Oncologist, Hematologist & BMT at Sammprada Hospital, Bengaluru, said, "Cancer-related pain can arise from tumour growth, nerve involvement, or treatment side effects. Untreated pain affects sleep, appetite, emotional well-being, and the ability to continue treatment. Pain management must be personalised and addressed early."

India has access to globally accepted pain-relief options, including Morphine, Methadone Syrup, Nalbuphine Injection, and Buprenorphine formulations. "Misconceptions around strong pain medicines often delay relief. When used appropriately, these medicines are safe and essential to maintain dignity and quality of life," Dr. Naik added.

Caregivers play a vital role in recognising warning signs such as restlessness, sleep disturbances, or appetite loss. Timely communication with healthcare teams ensures prompt intervention, reducing distress for both patients and families. Experts urge a shift in awareness from solely focusing on treatment outcomes to recognising pain relief as a core component of compassionate, patient-centred care.

Weekly Phone-In Programme launched in North City Corporation

BENGALURU

In an effort to directly address public grievances and improve the delivery of civic services, the Bengaluru North City Corporation has launched a weekly Phone-In Programme for citizens. The initiative, introduced by Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar, aims to provide residents with a direct platform to voice their concerns and seek timely solutions.

The Phone-In Programme will be held every Friday from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. This week's session is scheduled for Friday, during which citizens can speak directly with the Commissioner regarding a wide range of civic issues within the North City Corporation limits.

Residents can raise complaints related to road potholes and repair works, maintenance of streetlights, door-to-door garbage collection and waste disposal, removal of hazardous trees and overhanging branches, mosquito control measures, and management of stray dogs.

Ambulance driver booked for misusing siren, beacon

BENGALURU

An ambulance driver has been booked by Bengaluru police for misusing the siren and top beacon lights while driving home, misleading other road users into believing there was a medical emergency.

The driver-cum-owner of the ambulance, identified as Mohan Kumar, a resident of Banashankari, was intercepted near the Sadashivanagar police station junction. Police said Kumar was driving at high speed with the siren blaring and beacon lights switched on after leaving MS Ramaiah Hospital.

According to the police, commuters immediately gave way to the ambulance, assuming it was responding to an emergency. However, when traffic personnel stopped the vehicle for inspection, they found that there was no patient inside.

"Our staff from the Sadashivanagar traffic police station questioned the driver on why he had switched on the siren and lights and was driving at maximum speed," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic-West) Anoop Shetty.

Kumar initially claimed that he was rushing to Banashankari to attend to an emergency and told the police

that a patient suffering from breathing difficulties was waiting for him. He even attempted to drive away from the spot. The police, however, stopped him again and asked him to provide the patient's details and contact number.

"We told him that it would take at least 60 minutes to reach Banashankari from the spot and that we could arrange another ambulance from the nearest hospital to avoid putting the patient at risk," a senior traffic police officer said.

Cornered by the questioning, Kumar allegedly confessed that he had lied and admitted that he was returning home after dropping an elderly patient at MS Ramaiah Hospital. Police said the ambulance has been attached to the hospital for several years.

An official from the hospital also informed the police that Kumar had the habit of driving the ambulance with siren and beacon lights even when there was no emergency.

STEP TO SOLVE POWER SHORTAGE

Wildlife board clears 400kV power transmission upgrade in technology hub

BENGALURU

A long-pending clearance granted by the State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) has paved the way for upgrading a crucial 400kV power transmission line, promising uninterrupted and quality electricity supply to Bengaluru's fast-growing technology corridor in the city's eastern parts. The approval revives a key infrastructure project aimed at replacing a nearly four-decade-old transmission line that forms part of the southern segment of the national power grid.

Commissioned in the 1980s, the existing 400kV transmission line connects Somanahalli on Kanakapura Road to Mylasandra in Electronics City. Over the years, it has served as a vital power lifeline, linking Karnataka with Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, and extending connectivity up to eastern Odisha. However, with Bengaluru's rapid urban and industrial expansion, the ageing infrastructure has struggled to keep pace with rising demand.

A senior official from the Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Ltd (KPTCL) said the line feeds the 400kV Mylasandra substation, which currently transmits between 1,500 MW and 2,000 MW of power daily. "Due to increased load, the substation has been facing low-voltage issues. Maintaining quality and stable power supply had become a serious challenge," the official explained. He added that any tripping of the line due to overload could trigger cascading failures across the city's 220kV network, severely disrupting power supply.

To address these risks, KPTCL had proposed a comprehensive upgrade involving the erection of 24 new towers and the stringing of nearly 10 km of transmission lines. However, the project faced major hurdles as two proposed towers fell within the Bannerghatta National Park (BNP). Additionally, the plan required the removal and replacement of existing conductors passing through forest land, necessitating approvals from both the SBWL and the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL).

The proposal also drew strong opposition from conservationists, who raised concerns about potential risks to the elephant population in BNP. Responding to these apprehensions, KPTCL assured the wildlife board that no additional forest land would be diverted for the project.

"We decided to replace the existing two towers at the same locations and also replace about one kilometre of deteriorated conductors that are nearly 40 years old," a KPTCL official said. To further reduce environmental impact, the utility proposed increasing the height of the conductors by an additional 10 metres and reducing the Right of Way (RoW) from 52 metres to 46 metres.

QUICK READ

Bhatkal youth dies in train accident tragedy

Bhatkal

A 33-year-old youth, Muhammad Nasir of Gulmi, died after being struck by a train traveling from Murudeshwar to Bengaluru. The incident occurred near the railway bridge close to Bhatkal railway station on Wednesday. Authorities have registered a case at Bhatkal City Police Station, and an investigation is underway to determine the circumstances surrounding the accident. Police have urged locals to exercise caution near railway tracks. The tragic death has shocked the community, highlighting the dangers of railway areas and the need for public safety awareness.

Missing residential school student found safe

Kundagola

A 15-year-old student of Morarji Desai Residential School, Mattigatti village, was found safe after going missing from the hostel. The boy disappeared on January 23, and school authorities filed a complaint the next day at Gudageri Rural Police Station. Police launched a search and traced him in the Shah Lane area. The student told police he had gone to visit a temple without informing staff. Officials confirmed he was unharmed and later handed him to his guardians. Police and education officers stressed stricter supervision in residential schools. Parents urged regular inspections and clear safety guidelines to prevent similar incidents future.

Sirsi Court acquits 15 in 2019 murder case

Sirsi

The First Additional District and Sessions Court in Sirsi acquitted 15 of 16 accused in the 2019 murder case of Baba Jan, which occurred during the Lok Sabha elections in April that year. The case was registered at New Market Police Station, and the police had submitted a final report against the 16 accused. After examining witnesses, the court issued its order of acquittal. Advocates Asif Baikadi, Omar Farooq Mulki, and Ijaz Ahmed Ullal of Lex Juris Law Chamber, Mangalore, represented the accused. The verdict brings closure to a case pending for over six years.

Former Minister alleges politics over flood control

Munenakoppa said the BJP identified flood-affected villages and discussed relocation and rehabilitation while in power

HUBBALLI

A political fight has started over flood prevention work in the Bennehalla and Thupparihalla streams, with former minister Munenakoppa accusing the Congress government of using the issue only for publicity.

Speaking to media persons, he said people in flood-prone districts like Haveri, Gadag, and Dharwad suffer every monsoon as water overflows from these canals. He claimed earlier governments did not have a clear, long-term maintenance plan for the 141-kilometre stretch between Shiggaon and Menasagi.

Munenakoppa said that when the BJP was in power, steps were taken to find a permanent solution. He stated that villages affected by floods were identified and plans were discussed for relocation and rehabilitation where necessary.

He also recalled that an expert committee led by irrigation specialist G.S. Paramashivayya had been appointed to study the problem. According to him, the report suggested stopping excess flow, storing water, and using it later for drinking and farming needs.

The former minister alleged that several technical studies, including drone surveys, were carried out during the BJP rule. However, he accused the current Congress leaders of claiming credit and misleading the public.

He further said the total estimated cost of the Bennehalla project is around Rs 1,610 crore, but only about Rs 200 crore has been spent so far. He claimed the work is being done without proper planning.

Munenakoppa said he would write to the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister, urging them to complete the projects fully and provide lasting relief to people facing floods every year. He demanded transparency, regular updates, and strict monitoring to ensure public money is used properly and quickly.

Five-Year Jail for Hosa Vantamuri attackers

BELAGAVI

A sessions court in Belagavi has sentenced 12 people to five years of rigorous imprisonment each in connection with the shocking assault and humiliation of a woman in Hosa Vantamuri village.

The incident took place on December 11, 2023, and had drawn statewide outrage. According to the prosecution, relatives of a young woman allegedly targeted the mother of a man who had left home with their daughter. The woman was stripped, tied to an electric pole, and assaulted. The accused also vandalized the man's house during the incident.

Following public anger, the case was transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department for a detailed probe. The investigation team filed a chargesheet against 13 individuals in April 2024. During the trial, the prosecution presented 92 witnesses and 37 material objects as evidence.

On Tuesday, the 10th Additional District and Sessions Court found 12 of the accused guilty. The judge delivered the sentence on Wednesday, awarding each of them five years in prison. Proceedings against one juvenile accused are being handled separately under relevant legal provisions.

The accused were convicted under multiple sections related to unlawful assembly, assault, criminal intimidation, house trespass, and outraging the modesty of a woman.

Government Special Prosecutor L.S. Sullada represented the victims, while defense lawyers argued on behalf of the accused. Emotional scenes were witnessed in the courtroom as family members of the convicted broke down after the verdict was announced.

Legal experts said the judgment sends a strong message that acts of mob violence and humiliation against women will face strict punishment under the law.

Kerala students injured as tourist bus overturns

VIJAYANAGARA

A tourist mini bus carrying students and teachers from Kerala overturned near Ammanakeri Cross in Kudligi taluk, leaving eight people injured, including a college teacher. The bus was traveling from Thrissur district to Hampi when the accident occurred during an educational tour to visit historical sites. About thirty students and staff members of Sri Krishna College were on board at the time of the mishap.

Police said the driver allegedly lost control of the vehicle, hit a road divider, and the bus overturned on the roadside. Six students, including Vanukrishna, Anugraha, Aditya, Ajay Raj, Adul Krishna, and Nuhad, suffered minor injuries and were given first aid.

College teacher Dr. Rashmi sustained serious injuries to her leg and was admitted to a nearby hospital for treatment. Doctors said her condition is stable and she is under observation.

Local residents and passersby rushed to the spot and helped rescue the injured from the overturned bus. The injured were later shifted to hospitals in Kudligi for further care.

Police have registered a case and launched an investigation into the accident.

MP Prabha alleges parliament avoiding debate on security

DAVANAGERE

Davangere Member of Parliament Dr Prabha Mallikarjun has accused the Central Government of avoiding serious debate on national security and instead trying to divert public attention with political statements. Speaking to reporters in New Delhi on Wednesday, she said Parliament should focus on border safety and defence preparedness, but important questions are not being allowed proper discussion.

She claimed that ruling party members are given more freedom to speak in the House, while opposition voices are often interrupted. Referring to a recent debate, she said a BJP member was allowed to quote from several books without his microphone being cut. At the same time, she alleged that opposition leader Rahul Gandhi was not permitted to read from a book written by former Army Chief M M Naravane.

According to her, this shows an attempt to control the narrative inside Parliament. She also said that when the Prime Minister quoted from an international author's book while speaking about former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, there was no objection from the Chair. However, when opposition members try to present documents or references, they face restrictions.

Dr Mallikarjun said the opposition represents millions of citizens and silencing them weakens democracy. She argued that limiting debate on defence matters prevents people from knowing the truth about border issues and national preparedness.

She further alleged that the government does not want public discussion on sensitive matters related to China and past military decisions. She urged that Parliament must function fairly, allow equal opportunity to all sides, and hold meaningful discussions on national interest issues without bias or political pressure. She demanded transparent debate in the House.

KKRTC Bus Reduced to Ashes Overnight Kuknoor

KUKNOOR

A Kalyana Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC) bus was completely destroyed after a sudden fire broke out at the Kuknoor depot in Koppal district early Wednesday. Officials said the bus had returned after completing a Kuknoor–Hubballi trip and was parked inside the depot. Around 12.30 am, flames were noticed, and the fire spread rapidly, gutting the vehicle. Depot staff immediately alerted authorities and initiated fire safety measures, but the intensity of the blaze prevented rescue. No passengers or staff were on board, and no injuries were reported. KKRTC officials inspected the spot, and Kuknoor unit manager Venkatachalapathy said a suspected short circuit caused the fire. A detailed investigation has been launched to confirm the cause, assess losses, and strengthen maintenance and electrical safety measures to prevent similar incidents. Across all transport depots statewide, soon.

Outsourced drivers allege early removal, unpaid dues

HAVERI

Around 170 outsourced bus drivers engaged for the North West Karnataka Road Transport Corporation in Haveri have alleged that they were removed from duty before completing their contract period and have not been paid provident fund deductions or two months of salary.

According to the drivers, they were hired on an emergency basis through a private agency when there was a shortage of staff. Each driver signed an agreement for about 11 to 12 months and paid a deposit of ₹30,000 at the time of appointment. They said they were promised government related benefits during the service period.

The drivers claim ₹2,080 was cut from their wages every month towards provident fund. However, they allege the amount has not been credited to their PF accounts. Many said they were sent home weeks before their contract ended, leaving them without income.

They also said salaries for the last two months remain unpaid. Several drivers stated they are struggling to pay house rent, school fees, and loan installments. Some alleged they were sent back and forth between transport officials and the outsourcing agency when they sought clarification.

Haveri Divisional Controller Attar responded that the private agency deducted PF but did not deposit it. He said salary payments are being withheld until the PF issue is cleared. He added that discussions have been held with the agency and that pending PF and wages will be released once the amount is credited. Drivers have urged quick action, saying their families depend entirely on this income. They said delays are pushing many households into debt and emotional stress every single day now.

Farmers protest pending maize payments Dharwad District

DHARWAD

Anger erupted among farmers in Dharwad district on Tuesday, as ninety-five farming families protested outside the district administration office over delay in payment for maize procured under the government's minimum support price scheme.

The maize, a major crop in the region, was purchased on December 23, through the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society and Marketing Federation at Bayhatti village. Farmers from Bayhatti, Sullia, Kusugal, and Amargola supplied their produce, but the promised amount has still not been credited to their bank accounts.

Members of Rai Sena Karnataka led the protest, stating that repeated visits to offices brought no result. Protesters alleged that a Marketing Federation officer, Mallikarjuna, behaved rudely with farmers and ignored rules. They claimed he has remained posted at the same center for nearly fifteen years without accountability.

The farmers demanded immediate release of pending payments to all ninety-five beneficiaries and strict disciplinary action against the officer. Officials were urged to resolve the issue quickly to restore trust and protect farmers' livelihoods.

Local leaders warned that continued delays would push families into debt during the ongoing agricultural season. They appealed to the state government to intervene, ensure transparency, and prevent similar problems during future crop procurement drives across the district. Action, they said, is essential for justice and stability.

Aadhaar services resume at Bhatkal Mini Vidhana

BHATKAL

Aadhaar registration and correction services have restarted at the Mini Vidhana Soudha in Bhatkal, bringing relief to residents who were struggling for the past few months. The centre had been closed after the contract for the Aadhaar kit provided through a private agency expired.

Because of the closure, people had to depend on post offices and a few government centres, which were also facing technical issues. Many citizens, including students and beneficiaries of welfare schemes, faced delays in admissions, scholarships, pensions, and other essential services.

Residents said they were forced to stand in long queues from early morning just to get tokens for Aadhaar updates. Rural families with small children found it especially difficult. At times, police were deployed to manage the crowds at the post office.

After repeated complaints from the public and social groups, the issue was brought to the notice of the district administration. Local MLA and District In-charge Minister Mankal Vaidya were also informed. Following this, the District Collector intervened and took steps to restart services at the Mini Vidhana Soudha.

Tahsildar Nagendra Kolashetty said around 50 to 60 tokens will be issued daily. He added that arrangements have been made to help urgent cases. Officials also said some minor corrections can be done online through the UIDAI website. People feel two centres are not enough for the large population of Bhatkal taluk. They have urged the administration to open Aadhaar service facilities in more panchayat offices to reduce travel and waiting time for villagers in remote areas. Authorities said the demand will be reviewed based on need and staff availability soon across the taluk region.

Dharwad village installs CCTV to prevent crime

DHARWAD

Mummigatti, a village in Dharwad taluk, has become a model for others after installing a village-wide CCTV camera system to improve safety and prevent crime. The gram panchayat has set up 22 CCTV cameras across important streets and public places in the village at a total cost of about Rs 7.5 lakh. The system is fully managed by the gram panchayat office, and footage can be stored for nearly one month using a backup facility.

Mummigatti has a population of around 12,000 and is located close to the busy Pune–Bengaluru National Highway. Because of this, many vehicles and outsiders frequently pass through the area. Village leaders felt that proper monitoring was needed to stop illegal activities and protect residents.

Despite common complaints about lack of funds in rural bodies, the panchayat managed the project using its own financial resources. The village is known for collecting nearly Rs 50 lakh in taxes every year, which has helped it take up development works like this. Before installing the cameras, panchayat members, including the president and vice president, walked around the village to identify sensitive spots. They also consulted police officials from Garaga police station and installed the cameras based on their suggestions. Local residents say the new system will help reduce theft, harassment, and other crimes. With many new industries coming up nearby and people from different places settling here, villagers believe the cameras will help maintain peace.

UPSKILLING THROUGH AI

K'taka University plans major push into AI

DHARWAD

Karnataka University in Dharwad is preparing to introduce Artificial Intelligence related subjects across many traditional degree courses from the coming academic year. Vice Chancellor Prof. A.M. Khan said the move aims to equip students with modern skills and improve their job opportunities after graduation.

The university plans to blend AI learning with regular courses such as BA, BSc and BCom. Students studying arts and science streams will be given basic exposure to how AI works and how it is used in real life fields. Special modules of 15 to 30 teaching hours may be added to different subjects so that students from all backgrounds understand the technology.

New specialised programmes are also being designed. The university is considering starting courses like BSc in Artificial Intelligence, BSc Cyber Security, MSc in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, and MSc Cyber Security. Existing courses such as BCA may also be updated with options in AI, Data Science and Cyber Security.

To support this change, faculty members will be given training so they can teach the new subjects with confidence. The goal is to make students industry ready and help them find respectable jobs in a technology driven world.

Prof. Khan said education must change with time and universities cannot continue teaching only old syllabi. As AI is now used in many sectors, giving students early knowledge will benefit their careers. The decision has been welcomed by many who believe it will give Karnataka University students a competitive edge.

Officials said detailed syllabi, lab support, and industry partnerships will be developed soon to ensure practical learning and better placement opportunities for graduates across sectors.

QUICK READ

Medical camp planned for special children

Kushtagi

A medical check-up camp for special-talented children will be held on February 6 at 9.30 am in Vidyanagar, Kushtagi town. The camp is part of the Comprehensive Education Karnataka Scheme and covers Kushtagi and Yelaburga talukas. Specialist doctors will examine children with hearing loss, vision loss, cerebral palsy, physical disability, mental disability, and multiple disabilities. Students from pre-primary to 12th standard, including government-aided schools and colleges, can attend. Children must come with guardians, UDID, Aadhaar, photos, and income or BPL documents, officials said. The camp aims to support health, learning, dignity, and early care access for children.

Koppal cooperatives urged to submit auditor details

Koppal

The Deputy Director of Audit for Koppal District has asked cooperative societies to submit information about auditor appointments without delay. According to Karnataka Cooperative Societies Rules 1960 and Souharda Cooperatives Rules 2004, societies must report auditor appointments within seven days of their annual meeting. Many management boards have not complied, officials said. Societies must also submit annual meeting proceedings signed by the CEO and President. This applies to the 2025-26 audit. Officials emphasized timely submission to avoid issues. For details, societies can contact the Deputy Director's office at 7259730379. The move ensures transparency and proper financial checks.

Admission window extended for Karnataka Residential Schools

Koppal

The deadline to apply for admission to Morarji Desai, Kittur Rani Chennamma, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, and Indira Gandhi Residential Schools has been extended to February 7. The schools offer seats for talented backward, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and special-category poor students for the 2026-27 academic year. The Karnataka Examinations Authority will hold the entrance test on March 1, from 11 am to 1 pm. Students from class 5 onwards can apply online at nearby schools. Further applications are accepted until February 15. For details, visit kea.kar.nic.in or kreis.kar.nic.in, or contact the nearest school principal.

Post offices extend booking hours for public convenience

The extension allows customers arriving near closing to send Speed Post, parcels, and international mail conveniently on working days

GADAG

The Gadag Divisional Superintendent of Posts, S.S. Shirahatti, announced that the booking period for Speed Post, parcels, and other letters has been extended to benefit customers. Under this new arrangement, postal items can now be booked up to 30 minutes before the end of office working hours at all post offices.

This extension ensures that customers who arrive near closing time can still send their mail without inconvenience. The facility is available for Speed Post, parcels, and international mail services on all working days.

For added convenience, the Indian Postal Department offers the Customer Self Service Portal (https://app.indiapost.gov.in/customer-selfservice/login), where people can book postal items, track shipments, file complaints, and access detailed service information online. This digital platform allows customers to manage postal services from home, reducing the need to visit post offices in person.

Additionally, the "Dak Seva" mobile app has been launched to make postal services more accessible. The app allows booking, tracking, complaint registration, and service details directly on smartphones. Citizens can download the app using the QR code available on the India Post website.

S.S. Shirahatti urged the public to make full use of these facilities and contact their nearest divisional post office for guidance. The department's efforts aim to make postal services faster, easier, and more customer-friendly for the people of Gadag.

Hadapada announced forming "Uttara Karnataka Savita Samaj," with Gururaj proposed as state president to advance community development

Savita Samaj leaders demand justice

SAVANUR

Krishna H. Hadapada, district president of Gadag District Savita Samaj, called for stronger government support and recognition for the Savita community during the Sri Savita Maharshi Jayanti program at Gokak Sabha Bhavan. He emphasized the need for educational, economic, and social development for the society and demanded immediate action against those who use derogatory language about the Savita Samaj.

Hadapada thanked MLA Yasir Ahmadkhana Pathana for approving Rs. 25 lakh for the construction of a community hall at Shri Gadwal Jamalamma Devi Temple and urged for the swift release of funds. He also requested political recognition and a Congress party ticket for Venkatesh Undavelli, a young leader serving the community, to contest the upcoming municipal elections and further serve the public.

Speaking about the lack of political representation for Savita leaders in North Karnataka, Hadapada announced that a separate "Uttara Karnataka Savita Samaj" organization will soon be established. Gururaj has been proposed as the state president to lead the new body and work for the development of the community.

The event was presided over by Taluka President Eknath Bhajantri and attended by leaders including Tahsildar Ravikumar Koravara, Pancha Guarantee President Subhas Majjagi, Gururaj K, Minnalappa R., and others. High-achieving students in SSLC, PUC, and graduation were felicitated, a lecture was delivered by Kavya Prasad, and a procession with a portrait and musical instruments highlighted the celebrations.

The gathering called for unity, social justice, and active participation to strengthen the Savita Samaj in North Karnataka.

B.Ed admission fourth list seats announced

GADAG

The Karnataka government has released the fourth list of seat allotments for B.Ed admissions 2025-26. College-wise seat details were published online on January 29, 2026, at the official education portal. Candidates who have not yet secured admission were given time until January 31 to register their preferences for the fourth round.

Those allotted seats in this round must print the fee challan using their user ID and PAN card, pay it at any State Bank of India branch, and submit the fee along with all original documents at their District Nodal Center. Admission letters will be issued by February 6, and students must join the college by the given date.

Candidates receiving a seat for the first time but wishing to skip it can select "Opted for the Next Round" without paying any fee. Unallotted candidates will get another opportunity in the next round.

More details are available at schooleducation.kar.nic.in.

KKRTC Koppal division invites apprentice training applications

KOPPAL

Kalyan Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC) Koppal Division has invited applications for one year apprentice training under the Apprenticeship Act, 1961. Training will be given at depots and workshops in Koppal, Gangavathi, Kuknoor, Yelaburga, Kushtagi and the divisional workshop.

A total of 65 seats are available. These include 15 posts for Mechanic Diesel, 18 posts for Auto Electrician, and 32 posts for Auto Body Builder or Fitter. Applicants must have passed the related ITI trade.

Candidates must be at least 18 years old as of January 31, 2026. The upper age limit is 40 years for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates and 35 years for General category candidates. Seats are reserved as per rules, with 17 percent for Scheduled Castes and 7 percent for Scheduled Tribes. Selected trainees will receive a monthly stipend fixed by the corporation.

Those who already completed apprenticeship training earlier are not eligible. Training does not guarantee a job in KKRTC. Candidates must know how to read, write, and speak Kannada. They must also be physically fit and produce a medical certificate.

Applicants must attend a walk in interview on February 26 between 11 am and 1.30 pm at the Divisional Controller office, KKRTC Koppal Division, at their own cost. They should bring original documents, photocopies, Aadhaar, bank details, mobile number, and email ID.

Candidates must register online at apprenticeshipindia.gov.in and apply to the KKRTC Koppal Division establishment before 5.30 pm on February 25. Names and birth details must match SSLC and Aadhaar records. Applications with wrong information will be rejected without notice, officials said. No recommendations or pressure will be accepted in any form.

District gears up for Sant Sevalal Jayanti

GADAG

Additional Deputy Commissioner Dr. Duragesh K.R. has appealed for well-planned and dignified celebrations of Sant Sevalal Jayanti, scheduled on February 17 at the auditorium of the District Administration Building. He issued the directions while presiding over a pre-Siddhata meeting held at the District Collector's Office on Wednesday. Dr. Duragesh said the Jayanti should be celebrated not only at the district level but also in hostels, schools, colleges, and Gram Panchayats across all taluks. Emphasising coordination and discipline, he said the programmes should reflect the values and teachings of Sant Sevalal. Special programmes will be organised to felicitate students from the community who have secured highest marks in the SSLC and PUC examinations. He instructed officials to print invitation letters following proper etiquette and tradition. Scholars and speakers who have studied the life and message of Sant Sevalal will be invited to deliver lectures during the celebrations. The Additional District Magistrate stressed that the event should be neat, meaningful, and respectful.

Senior citizens, community leaders, and officials from various departments attended the meeting. Officials present.

Students gain skills at incubation workshop event

GADAG

A workshop on incubation was organized at Mrs. Kamala and Mr. Venkappa M. Agadi College of Engineering & Technology, Lakshmeshwara, to help students explore entrepreneurship and innovation. The program was held in collaboration with the Industries and Commerce Department, District Industrial Centre, Gadag, and Karnataka State Marketing Communication & Advertising Ltd., Bangalore, under the Rising & Accelerating MSAA Performance (RAMP) scheme.

Dr. Parashuram Baraki, Principal of Agadi College, along with Dr. R.M. Patil, Dean-Academic, and Dr. Subhas Meti, Joint Director of the District Industrial Center, participated in the workshop. Prashanth P. Barigida and other college officials were also present to guide the students.

The session was led by Dr. Cyril Prasanna Raj P., Director of CCCIR and CEO of Angsotamar Resource Person, Bangalore. He delivered a detailed lecture on incubation and start-up development using a PowerPoint presentation, helping students understand the process of turning ideas into successful projects.

Students of Agadi College actively participated, asking questions and engaging in discussions, which made the workshop lively and interactive. The event aimed to encourage innovation, entrepreneurship, and practical thinking among young learners.

The college authorities expressed their satisfaction over the program and thanked all resource persons and organizers for conducting a successful workshop, emphasizing that such initiatives will help students gain valuable skills for their future careers.

Koppal prepares for state talent Kalotsava event

KOPPAL

Deputy Commissioner Dr Suresh B Itnal directed officials to make careful arrangements for the State Level Talent Fountain and Kalotsava program to be held in Karatagi on February 7 and 8. He said hundreds of school children from across Karnataka will take part, and there should be no confusion or inconvenience.

He spoke during a preparatory meeting at the District Collector's office. The event is organized by the School Education Department for the year 2025-26. Competitions will take place at the KPS High School section in Karatagi. A total of 1,295 students from different districts are expected to arrive with teachers and guides.

The Deputy Commissioner asked officials to set up help desks at bus stands and railway stations to guide students to their dormitories and competition venues. Clean drinking water, hot water, neat rooms, and proper sanitation must be ensured where students stay. Nutritious and hygienic food should be served on time.

Buses must be arranged to carry students between lodging places, dining halls, and program venues. Transport officers were told to check vehicle safety. First aid kits should be available in buses and dormitories. The Health Department must post medical teams at venues for emergencies.

Local bodies were instructed to keep the surroundings clean and provide enough toilets. Department staff must remain present at dormitories to assist students.

Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Varnit Negi said students should receive clear information in advance about venues to avoid confusion. All departments must work together smoothly. Deputy Director Somashekar Gowda Patil shared details of the competitions. Several district and taluk officers attended the meeting for smooth conduct.

Citizens urged to follow traffic rules strictly

MANDYA

The 37th National Road Safety Awareness Month-2026 was marked with a massive foot march and cycle rally, flagged off by the District Collector in Mandya. The event aimed to promote road safety and create awareness about traffic rules among citizens.

Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Kumar highlighted that speeding, drunk driving, and ignoring helmets or seat belts are the main causes of road accidents. He emphasized that obeying traffic rules is the responsibility of every citizen and urged the public to be alert to prevent loss of life and property.

Participants in the walkathon and cycle march took a pledge to follow traffic rules, maintain road safety, and contribute to building an accident-free society. The rally started from the District Collector's office and reached Sanjay Talkies circle, drawing attention from residents and passersby.

Senior officials present at the event included Senior Civil Judge and Member Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority Anand M, Regional Transport Officer T.J. Hemavati, retired RTO Superintendent M.G.N. Prasad, and the head of the local Scout and Guide organization. Students from various schools also participated enthusiastically, raising slogans and holding banners to promote safe driving habits.

The event concluded with a reminder that road safety depends not only on authorities but also on responsible behavior by every individual on the road.

SHARANAR JAYANTI SPIRIT

Planned meaningful Kayak Sharanar Jayanti

GADAG

Preparations are underway to celebrate Kayak Sharanar Jayanti in a meaningful and organized manner on February 10 at the auditorium of the District Administration Building. Additional Deputy Commissioner Dr. Duragesh K.R. directed officials to ensure the event reflects the values and teachings of Kayak Sharanar.

He was speaking while presiding over a preparatory meeting held at the District Collector's office on Wednesday. Dr. Duragesh said the celebrations should not be limited to the district headquarters but should also be conducted properly at the taluk level. He stressed the importance of planning each activity carefully and following official etiquette. As part of the celebrations, students who secured the highest marks in the SSLC and PUC examinations will be felicitated to encourage academic excellence. Invitation cards will be printed in a dignified manner, and scholars who have studied the life and philosophy of Kayak Sharanar will deliver lectures during the program.

Senior citizens and respected members of society attended the meeting and shared their suggestions. Officials from various departments also participated and assured their cooperation.

The administration aims to conduct the Jayanti in a disciplined and respectful way, making it memorable for the public.

Assistant Director of the Department of Kannada and Culture, Dr. Basavaraj Bellary, welcomed the gathering.

QUICK READ

Chikkaballapur invites applications for Atma Scheme

Chikkaballapura

The Office of the Joint Director of Agriculture has invited applications for Taluk Technical Manager (BTM) and Assistant Technical Manager (ATM) posts under the Atma Scheme. Two BTM positions (Bagepalli and Gouribidanur) and two ATM positions (Thondebavi and Bashattahalli) are available on a one-year direct contract. Candidates should have agriculture or allied sector degrees with computer skills and relevant field experience. Applications with certificates must be submitted in a sealed envelope by February 21, 5 pm, via registered post. Late submissions will not be accepted. For details, contact the Joint Director of Agriculture, Chikkaballapur.

Chitradurga to host Financial Literacy Week

Chitradurga

A five-day Financial Literacy Week will be held across Chitradurga district from February 9 to 13 to promote awareness about banking and financial discipline. Organized by the District Lead Bank under the guidance of the Department of Financial Services and the Reserve Bank of India, the week will be inaugurated by Zilla Panchayat CEO Dr. S. Akash on February 9 with a poster release. Activities will take place in 258 bank branches. The theme is "KYC," covering topics like official documents, ReKYC, Video KYC, and Aadhaar-based CKYC. Daily programs will be conducted by Financial Literacy Centers and CFLs across the district.

Chikkaballapur invites entries for Children's Book Award

Chikkaballapura

Karnataka Bala Vikas Academy has invited entries for the "Children's Book Moon Award" for books published in 2024 and 2025. Seven types of children's literature are eligible, including original poetry, story collections, dramas (not textbooks), novels, scientific articles, translations, and literary criticism. Authors must submit four copies of each book along with a self-description and request for evaluation to the Academy's central office in Dharwad by February 20. Late entries will not be considered. For more information, authors can contact the Project Officers at 0836-2465490, 8050392209, 7204396275, or 9448981944. The award encourages quality writing for children.

Chitradurga residents alerted for power outage

Chitradurga

BESCOM has announced a power outage on February 5 from 10 am to 5 pm in parts of Chitradurga rural subdivision. The outage is due to the installation of a spun pole near the Bijapur power distribution center. NJY and IP lines supplied from the center will be affected, though power to IP lines will resume by 10 am. Areas affected include Bijapur, Lakshmisagar, N. Ballekatte, Hirekabbigere, and nearby villages. Consumers are urged to cooperate during the maintenance work, said the Assistant Executive Engineer of BESCOM, Chitradurga. The measure aims to improve electricity supply reliability.

Farmers protest land acquisition in Ramanagara district

The march started at Revenue House, proceeded to the District Collector's office, demanding the project be dropped and officials act farmer-friendly

RAMANAGARA

Farmers, pro-Kannada groups, and pro-Dalit organizations held a protest in Ramanagara on Wednesday opposing the proposed Bidadi Smart City and GBIT projects and criticizing the District Collector's attitude.

The march began at the Revenue House and moved to the District Collector's office, where protesters demanded that the project be dropped and that officials work in a farmer-friendly and people-friendly manner.

They shouted slogans against large scale land acquisition, saying fertile land in Bidadi Hobli, Bhairamangala, and Kanchagaranahalli is being taken in the name of development.

Speakers alleged that thousands of acres are being targeted in other areas too, including Sarjapur in Anekal taluk, which they said will badly affect farmers' livelihoods.

Protesters also raised issues like rising human wildlife conflict, delayed compensation, pending pump set power connections, stray dog problems, and delay in regularizing long cultivated lands.

They accused departments of ignoring farmers' struggles and said price rise and policy decisions have made rural life more difficult in recent years.

Some leaders claimed that farmers who have tilled land for generations now face trouble in producing records, and fear losing their land without proper consultation.

They criticized the district administration, alleging it was acting under political pressure and not listening to the voices of affected villagers.

Leaders from several farmer and social groups joined the protest and warned that the agitation would continue if land acquisition plans are not reviewed.

They urged the government to hold open meetings, share clear details, and protect agricultural land, water sources, and village livelihoods before moving ahead with any large project in the region. Police were present and the protest ended peacefully in town.

Officials urge voter awareness ahead of revision

Vastrad directed schools, colleges, polling areas, and offices to actively inform citizens about voter list revision, register associations on the ELC website, and upload awareness programs for transparency

CHITRADURGA

State SWEEP Nodal Officer P.S. Vastrad emphasized the need to create awareness among voters ahead of the comprehensive revision of electoral rolls (SIR) during a district-level SWEEP Committee meeting held at the Zilla Panchayat Hall on Wednesday.

Presiding over the meeting, Vastrad directed that schools and colleges, through Voter Literacy Associations (ELC), polling booth areas via Election Awareness Associations (VAC), and offices through Voter Awareness Forums (VAF), should actively inform citizens about the voter list revision process. He added that all voter literacy association details must be registered on the ELC website, and every awareness program should be uploaded for transparency and tracking.

The meeting highlighted the importance of engaging citizens to ensure accurate and updated voter information, which will strengthen the democratic process and encourage broader participation in upcoming elections.

Additional Deputy Commissioner B.T. Kumaraswamy, Zilla Panchayat Deputy Secretary Dr. Rangaswamy, Sub-Divisional Officer Venkatesh Naik, Tahsildar B.M. Govindaraj, Deputy Director of School Education M.R. Manjunath, Election Tahsildar Bibi Fatima, Shirastedar Mallikarjun Nayak, and other district-level SWEEP committee officials attended the meeting.

The SWEEP initiative aims to ensure comprehensive voter education, enhance participation, and maintain accuracy in voter lists, particularly among first-time and underrepresented voters.

At Aizur Circle, protesters criticized the central government's anti-Kannada policy and demanded railway exams also be conducted in Kannada

Protest held over railway exams language issue

RAMANAGARA

Activists of Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (Swabhimani faction) staged a protest in Ramanagara on Wednesday against the Railway Department for not allowing recruitment examinations to be written in Kannada.

The demonstration was held at Aizur Circle, where protesters accused the central government of following an anti-Kannada policy. They said allowing exams only in Hindi and English is unfair to Kannada medium students and demanded that railway recruitment tests be conducted in Kannada as well.

State in-charge Shiva Gowda alleged that Kannadigas have long faced injustice in railway employment. He said limiting exam languages reduces opportunities for local youth to secure higher posts. Protesters claimed this policy forces students to depend on other languages and sidelines their mother tongue.

They also urged Union ministers from Karnataka and local MPs to raise the issue with the central government. Speakers said elected representatives should protect the interests of Kannada speaking candidates.

The protesters warned that if their demand is ignored, larger demonstrations will be organized across the state. They stressed that Kannada has a rich history and deserves equal respect in national level recruitment processes.

Several office bearers and members of the organization took part in the protest and raised slogans in support of language rights. Police were present at the venue to maintain order, and the protest remained peaceful.

Students Protest Plan to Convert Govt Colleges into University Constituent Units

BENGALURU

Hundreds of students staged a protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru against the state government's proposal to convert Government RC College and Government Arts College into constituent colleges under Dr Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University.

The protesters said the move would lead to a sharp increase in fees and place an additional financial burden on students from poor and middle-class families. Both institutions currently cater largely to students from economically weaker sections, offering affordable education under the government college system.

According to the students, bringing the colleges under the direct administrative control of the university would alter the existing fee structure. They fear that tuition fees, administrative charges and other costs would rise once the colleges are converted into constituent units, making higher education inaccessible for many.

"Even a small increase in fees can force students like us to drop out," said one of the protesters, adding that many families are already struggling to meet educational expenses.

The students demanded that the government withdraw the proposal and allow the colleges to continue functioning as government-run institutions with subsidised fees. They also criticised the authorities for allegedly taking the decision without consulting key stakeholders such as students and faculty members.

Protesters said the move undermines the principle of social equity and threatens educational inclusion, especially for first-generation learners. They urged the government to reconsider the proposal in the larger interest of accessible public education and to hold discussions with all concerned parties before implementing any structural changes.

The protest remained peaceful, with students raising slogans and holding placards highlighting their concerns over affordability and access to higher education.

Preparations underway for Sant Sevalal Jayanti Celebration

GADAG

Additional Deputy Commissioner Dr. Duragesh K.R. has directed officials to organize Sant Sevalal Jayanti in a proper and disciplined manner on February 17 at the Auditorium Hall of the District Administration Building. He made the remarks while presiding over the pre-Siddhata meeting held at the District Collector's Office on Wednesday.

Dr. Duragesh emphasized that celebrations should not be limited to the district headquarters but also conducted at hostels, schools, colleges, and Gram Panchayats at the taluk level. The program will include felicitating students from the community who have scored top marks in SSLC and PUC examinations. He also instructed that invitation letters be printed following proper etiquette and lectures be arranged by scholars familiar with Sant Sevalal's teachings. He stressed that the Jayanti should be celebrated in a neat and organized manner.

The meeting was attended by prominent community members, including Ravikant Angadi, Chandrakatha Chauhan, Pandu Chauhan, N.V. Rathod, K.C. Nabapur, G.D. Nayak, Roopsingh Poojara, and Tippanna Pawar, along with officials from various departments.

Assistant Director of the Kannada and Culture Department, Dr. Basavaraja Bellary, welcomed all participants and expressed gratitude for their presence and cooperation. The administration aims to make this year's Sant Sevalal Jayanti meaningful and memorable for the community, highlighting respect, culture, and social unity.

ENTHRALLING PERFORMANCE

Soudamini Rao Katapady recently performed a solo dance at Udupi Rajangana during the Sri Shiroor Paryayan. She was accompanied by Acharya. Indira Kadambi on nattuvangam, Vishwesh Swaminathan on vocals, Vidyashankar N on mridangam, and Vivek V Krishna on flute.

Applications open for medical officer posts

CHITRADURGA

The Chitradurga district administration has invited applications for the recruitment of Medical Officers on a contract basis. A total of 22 vacant posts are available, including 12 Emergency Medical Officers, 3 Senior Medical Officers, and 7 General Duty Medical Officers. These positions are for Taluk Hospitals, Community Health Centers, and Primary Health Centers across the district.

Eligible MBBS graduate doctors can apply for one-year contract appointments or permanent positions, whichever occurs earlier. Selection will be based on a roster-cum-merit interview system.

Interviews will begin on February 10 and continue daily until all posts are filled. Candidates must appear at the District Health and Family Welfare Officer's office with their biodata, original documents, and attested copies for verification.

Akshaya wins state-level Rasa Qeshwa prize

CHIKKABALLAPUR

Akshaya, a fifth-grade student at Hennangoor Government Senior Primary School in Shidlaghatta taluk, has won first place at the state level in the Rasa Qeshwa competition. The event was organized by the National Innovation Mission Comprehensive Education Karnataka.

Deputy Director of the School Education Department, V. Ramesh, visited the school to congratulate the young achiever. Originally from Uttar Pradesh, Akshaya's parents, Amarnath and Poonamma, moved to the village twelve years ago in search of work and have since settled there. Despite being a migrant child, Akshaya has mastered the Kannada language remarkably.

Her success is credited to the guidance of her head teacher V. Srinivas and teachers Kiran and Srilakshmi, who trained and supported her throughout the competition. Akshaya's achievement is a proud moment for the school and inspires other children in the region to excel in academics and extracurricular activities.

RESERVATION FOR KANNADA

Panel seeks higher quota for Kannada students

CHITRADURGA

Kannada Development Authority Chairman Dr Purushottam Bilimale said he will recommend increasing reservation for Kannada medium candidates in state government jobs from 5 percent to 10 percent.

He spoke after a district level meeting on Kannada implementation and told reporters that opportunities for Kannadigas are shrinking. He said priority for Kannada medium youth will also be suggested in outsourced posts.

Bilimale said rules under the Comprehensive Development of Kannada Language Act will be framed soon. Once notified, officers who ignore Kannada in administration may face fines, transfers, or other action.

A statewide drive is correcting spelling and pronunciation of town names on signboards. Officials are working with highway authorities to fix errors.

The authority will write to the Union government seeking banking and railway exams in Kannada. Banks have been told to provide forms, challans, and at least one Kannada knowing officer.

Projects to expand Kannada learning in madrasas and prepare a dictionary for gender minorities are underway. Textbook continuity and practical language teaching will also be improved.

He noted large teacher vacancies across the state and said a report on shortages in Chitradurga will be sent to the Education Department. He added that supplying Kannada newspapers to schools can build language skills and awareness among students.

District officials and Kannada activists attended the meeting and supported stronger steps to promote Kannada in daily life. Bilimale said language respect is linked to identity and equal opportunity, and urged departments to act without delay. Public cooperation is also necessary, he said, to ensure Kannada thrives in education, governance, and business. Efforts will continue statewide, he added steadily ahead.

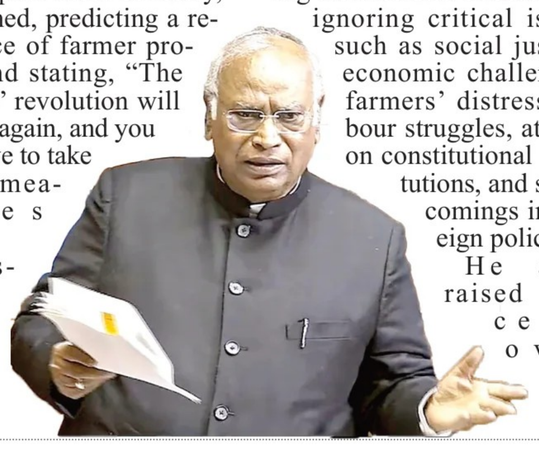
Kharge slams govt over India-US Trade Deal threats

Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge strongly criticised the government, warning of farmers' unrest over trade agreements

NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, launched a scathing attack on the Union government during the discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address on Wednesday. He accused the administration of compromising India's national interests through the recently announced India-US trade deal, warning it would force Indian farmers into unfair competition with their American counterparts, severely affecting their livelihoods.

Kharge asserted that the trade agreement, highlighted by US President Donald Trump and acknowledged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, could open Indian markets to American products while lowering tariffs on US goods. "You are setting up Indian farmers to compete with American farmers; this will impact them severely," he warned, predicting a resurgence of farmer protests and stating, "The farmers' revolution will happen again, and you will have to take these measures back."



Questioning India's global standing, he asked, "When our sovereignty is being attacked, when we are under the control of Trump, what is our position in our world?" Kharge described the government's stance as weak and untenable, criticizing the President's address for ignoring critical issues such as social justice, economic challenges, farmers' distress, labour struggles, attacks on constitutional institutions, and shortcomings in foreign policy.

He also raised concerns over gender equality, saying women were treated as a vote bank, pointing out the Union government's failure to implement promised reservations and the absence of women leaders in organisations like the RSS.

Kharge's speech focused on tensions in Parliament over the India-US trade pact, which reportedly includes reduced US tariffs on Indian goods, commitments by India to open markets to American products, and increased US energy and agricultural purchases. His remarks highlighted broader concerns over economic sovereignty, rural distress, and social equity, signaling potential conflicts during the ongoing Budget session.

China's discount oil imports face rising geopolitical risks

NEW DELHI

China's long standing approach of buying cheap crude oil from sanctioned nations such as Russia, Iran and Venezuela is facing growing problems due to rising geopolitical tensions and changes in global relations. Nearly 40 per cent of China's crude imports come from these three countries – a large share tied to sources with sanctions, political instability and broader risks.

For years, China took advantage of steep discounts on oil from these sanctioned suppliers to fuel its refining sector and wider economy. Russian and Iranian oil often came at prices several dollars below global benchmarks. Venezuelan crude was especially discounted, making it attractive to Chinese buyers, including independent refineries known as "teapots."

However, geopolitical shifts are disrupting this model. The United States' removal of Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro and increased sanctions enforcement have sharply reduced the flow of discounted Venezuelan crude to China, weakening a once reliable source.

Iran, another key supplier, continues to export to China, but growing unrest within the country, combined with stricter global sanctions, has complicated its oil trade. Meanwhile, China's reliance on Russian oil – its largest single crude source – stems from the rerouting of supplies after the Ukraine conflict, but this too carries risk as sanctions tighten and trade patterns evolve.

DMK holds talks with Cong ahead of polls

CHENNAI

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi on Wednesday chaired the party's Election Manifesto Committee meeting at Arivalayam in Chennai, ahead of the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. She confirmed that alliance discussions are ongoing with the Congress party, but added that the number of constituencies each party will contest will be decided by a separate negotiation committee.

Speaking to reporters, Kanimozhi said, "Alliance talks are currently underway with the Congress party. No discussions have taken place regarding the number of constituencies. The negotiation committee will make that decision. If any new party joins the alliance, the Chief Minister will announce it."

Tamil Nadu is expected to hold state elections in the first half of 2026, although the Election Commission of India (ECI) has yet to release the official schedule. In the 234-member Assembly, the DMK won 133 seats in 2021, while Congress secured 18, PMK five, VCK four, and others eight.

Kanimozhi also criticised the suspension of eight opposition MPs from the Lok Sabha during the ongoing Budget Session, calling the move "unacceptable."

KARNATAKA MAY GET NEW HIGH-SPEED RAIL

NEW DELHI

Following the recent Union Budget announcement of seven high-speed rail corridors across India, the central government has indicated a positive response toward adding another corridor for Karnataka. Union Minister for Food and Consumer Affairs Pralhad Joshi actively requested a high-speed rail link between Bengaluru and Pune, and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw responded positively to this proposal.

On Wednesday morning, Pralhad Joshi met Ashwini Vaishnaw to discuss the feasibility of constructing the Bengaluru-Pune corridor. Joshi highlighted the benefits of this corridor, emphasizing that it would significantly contribute to the overall development of Karnataka. He assured the Railway Minister that the new rail link would enhance economic growth, trade, and connectivity across several regions of the state.

The proposed corridor is expected to particularly benefit Central and North Karnataka. Districts such as Belagavi, Hubballi, Haveri, Davanagere, Chitradurga, and Tumakuru are likely to see faster travel options, improved accessibility, and overall regional development. In addition, the corridor would strengthen links between Pune and seven key districts in Karnataka, making it easier for passengers and businesses to move efficiently. Minister Joshi emphasized that the project would not only reduce travel time but also create new opportunities for industrial, commercial, and social growth along the corridor. The Railway Minister reportedly responded positively to the request and assured that detailed planning and discussions would follow.

This initiative comes at a time when India is expanding its high-speed rail network, with multiple corridors already under consideration and development. If implemented, the Bengaluru-Pune high-speed rail project is expected to transform regional transportation, boost economic development, and enhance connectivity between major cities in the state.

Japan starts human trials for Nipah vaccine

NEW DELHI

Japanese researchers have announced that clinical trials for a potential Nipah virus vaccine in humans will begin in April. The vaccine candidate, developed at the University of Tokyo, is set to start Phase 1 trials in Belgium.

The new vaccine offers hope against Nipah virus, a deadly disease with a fatality rate estimated between 40 and 75 per cent. Currently, no licensed vaccine or specific treatment exists for Nipah virus infections. The development comes after India reported two confirmed cases in West Bengal in January.

The vaccine is created by inserting a portion of the Nipah virus's genetic information into the measles virus. When administered, it produces antigen proteins similar to Nipah virus, prompting the immune system to strengthen its defenses and prevent disease symptoms. Researchers say the modified measles virus has already shown safety and efficacy in animal trials with hamsters.

The upcoming Phase 1 trial will involve 60 participants to confirm safety in humans. Separately, Oxford University has begun Phase 2 trials for a Nipah vaccine in Bangladesh with about 300 volunteers aged 18 to 55.

Nipah virus, a zoonotic disease, primarily spreads from bats to humans, often through contaminated food. It can also transmit from animals such as pigs, and between humans via close contact, especially in healthcare settings. In humans, infections range from mild illness to severe respiratory disease and fatal encephalitis.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has classified Nipah as a priority disease under its Research and Development Blueprint. If successful, the Japanese vaccine could provide a critical tool in controlling outbreaks, reducing fatalities, and protecting at-risk populations in regions prone to Nipah virus infections.

Ex-US Marine warns China could target India

NEW DELHI : Grant Newsham, a former US Marine intelligence officer, has warned India to remain cautious of China's intentions. With global attention focused on Taiwan, he suggested that China could choose to attack another country, possibly India. Newsham emphasized that Chinese actions are often deceptive and unpredictable, and India must prepare for multiple scenarios.he noted that as President Xi Jinping reorganizes the PLA, China may test its military capabilities elsewhere. "When everyone is focused on Taiwan, the smart approach is to look where others aren't," Newsham said. He listed India, the Korean Peninsula, southern Japan, and the Philippines as potential areas of interest.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MOHAMMED ABDUL HAI S/o NIAMAT ALI JAMADAR, R/o 67, Gandhi Nagar, Samadana Nagar, K G Halli, Arabic College, Bangalore North, Bangalore, Karnataka560045, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as ABDUL HAI.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MANISHA PRAKASH W/o VED PRAKASH, R/o D 603, Purva Westend, Kudlu Gate, Opp Metro Station, Garvebhavi Palya, Bommanahalli, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560068, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as MANISHA BHATT.

NAME CHANGE

I, **CHITRA ANANDKUMAR,** W/o Ananda Kumar Anka Reddy, resident of No 36, 2nd A Main, 15th Cross, Behind Farmill Apartment, Sector 6 HSR Layout, Bengaluru-560102, have changed my name to **CHITRA N,** vide affidavit dated: 03.02.2026, before Notary G. DAYANANDA, Bangalore.

Document Lost

This is to inform to General public that my client Sri, **Wassem Ulla Khan** s/o sanaullakhan, Residing at Nugalabande, Mulabagilu town and Taluk, Kolar District, I am the Owner of the Below said Property,while Sale Deed for taken Digital copy ,have lost following Document of property pertating to below Mentioned property Situated at Nugalabande, Mulabagilu town and Taluk, Kolar District, had published the factum of lost of her Original Sale Deed,Dated;-07-09-2015, Regd Sale Deed, Executed by Sri.Dilipkumar s/o Kantharaja, in Favour of Smt. Padmavathamma urf Smt, Padma w/o B.Srinivasappa,In regd as Book No.1,Volume No.MBL-1-01941/2015-16, in cdno.MBLD 178, In regd before of the SRO Mulabagal , in Respect of Property Bearing Mulabagilu town, Nugalabande ,Municipal assessment no.9742/2, in Measuring 40x30 Feets, police complaint have been filed with regards to loss of the above said Document vide complaint in NCR NO. Lost Report no.2045240/2026, DATED;-04-02-2026, and complaint dated;-04-02-2026, by respective person,if anybody finds these Document please inform within 7 Days in Below mentioned Address.
Place;-Chinthamani,
Date;-04-02-2026.

K.S.HARISH KUMAR
ADVOCATE
Office: NEAR KISHORE SCHOOL, ABOVE APPOLO PHARMACY, BESIDE SANTHOSHI MATHA TEMPLE, BANGALORE MAIN ROAD CHINTHAMANI.
MOB;-**9980110692**

University of Mysore

Viswavidyanilaya Karya Soudha, Crawford Hall, Post Box No.406
Mysore-570 005-**570 005. Phone.: 2419222/2419361**
E-mail: registrar@uni-mysore.ac.in Website: www.uni-mysore.ac.in

No. GL5/168/2025-26. Date : 31.01.2026

Re-Tender Notification-Call 2

The Registrar, University of Mysore, Mysuru invites tenders from the Eligible Registered Leading caterers for 'Supplying of Catering Services to meetings, functions & other special days held at various departments/offices & other buildings of Univerisy of Mysuru for 01 year as per the KTPP Act through KPPP portal of Government of Karnataka. in two cover tender system. The last date for submission of re tender is **16.02.2026 upto 4:00 pm.** The details can be obtained in e-procurement website **http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Details of terms and conditions are uploaded in e-procurement portal. For further details please contact Telephone No: 0821-2419222/361.

Sd/- Registrar
University of Mysore

DIPR/MYS/1605/SA/2025-26

ನಗರಸಭಾ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಲಯ, ಹೊಸಕೋಟೆ
ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ–562114,
ದೂರವಾಣಿ:–27931221, ಸಹಾಯವಾಣಿ: 27931759
Email:-itstaff_ulb_hosakote@yahoo.com Website: www.hosakotecity.mrc.gov.in

ನಂ.ನಸಹೊ/ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಶಾಖೆ/ಟೆಂಡರ್/ಸಿಆರ್/12/2025–26 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 04.02.2026

" ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ" (ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಕೆ.ಟಿ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ)

ಪೌರಾಯುಕ್ತರು ನಗರಸಭೆ ಹೊಸಕೋಟೆ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ ಇವರಿಂದ ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಮೂಲಕ 2025–26ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ 15ನೇ ಹಣಕಾಸು ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿ ಬಿಡುಗಡೆಯಾದ ಬಡ್ಡಿ ಮೊತ್ತ ಹಾಗೂ 2025–26ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ ನಗರಸಭಾ ನಿಧಿಯಡಿ ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗೆ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸ್ಟ್ಯಾಂಡರ್ಡ್ ಡಾಕ್ಯುಮೆಂಟ್ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು ಏಕ/ದ್ವಿ–ಲಕೋಟೆ ಪದ್ಧತಿಯಡಿ ಅರ್ಹ ದರ್ಜೆಯ ನೋಂದಾಯಿತ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರಿಂದ ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್ ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮುಖಾಂತರ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು ಕರೆಯಲಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ.

ಕ್ರ.ಸಂ	ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳ ವಿವರ	ಅಂದಾಜು ಮೊತ್ತ (ರೂ.ಲಕ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ)	ಇ.ಎಂ.ಡಿ ಮೊತ್ತ ರೂ.ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ	ಮೀಸಲಿರಿಸಿರುವ ವರ್ಗ
01	DMA/2025-26/WS/WORK_ INDENT53343	20.00	25,000/-	SC
02	DMA/2025-26/WS/WORK_ INDENT53345	20.00	25,000/-	ST
03	DMA/2025-26/WS/WORK_ INDENT53344	18.00	45.000/-	CAT-I
04	DMA/2025-26/WS/WORK_ INDENT53348	20.00	50,000/-	CAT-II(A)
05	DMA/2025-26/WS/WORK_ INDENT53346	19.80	49,500/-	Genaral
06	DMA/2025-26/WS/WORK_ INDENT53347	15.00	37,500/-	Genaral
07	DMA/2025-26/BD/WORK_ INDENT54942	8.50	21,300/-	Genaral

1) ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು **ಕ್ರ.ಸಂ: 01 ರಿಂದ 06ರ** ವರೆಗಿನ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಕೊನೆಯ **ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಯ 19.02.2026 ರ ಸಂಜೆ 5:30 ಗಂಟೆ**ಯವರೆಗೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ ತೆರೆಯುವ **ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಯ 21.02.2026 ರ ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 11:00 ಗಂಟೆಗೆ** ಹಾಗೂ ಕ್ರ.ಸಂ: 01 ರಿಂದ 05ರ ವರೆಗಿನ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 23.02.2026 ಮತ್ತು ಕ್ರ.ಸಂ: 07ರ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಯ ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಯ 11.02.2026 ರ ಸಂಜೆ 5:30 ಗಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ ತೆರೆಯುವ **ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಯ 13.02.2026 ರ ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 11:00** ಗಂಟೆಗೆ ನಿಗಧಿಪಡಿಸಲಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ.
2)ಟೆಂಡರ್ ದಾಖಲೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/#/portal/portal-home** ನಿಂದ ಡೌನ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವುದು.

ಸಹಿ/– ಪೌರಾಯುಕ್ತರು
ನಗರಸಭೆ, ಹೊಸಕೋಟೆ.

ವಾಸಾಸಂಇ/ವಾ.ಪ್ರ/ಎಸ್‌ಎಸ್‌ಸಿ/5421/2025–26

CHANGE OF NAME

I, KHAJIMIYA S/o MAINUDDIN SAB, R/o JAYANAGARA 6TH CROSS, Shikarpur, Shikaripur, Shivamogga, Karnataka-577427, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as KHAJAMIYA KADASHATTIHALLI.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, JAYAPRAKASAN DAMODARAN NAIR S/o DAMODARAN PAYYADAKATH NAIR, R/o C 507, Mantri Webcity, Parcel 1, Hennur Main Road, Near South Asian Bible College, Narayanpura, Kothanur, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560077, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as JAYAPRAKASAN KANA KADAYAKKARA NAIR.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Sudha J,** W/o T. Jayaram, aged 38 years, R/at Kalpavruksha Nilaya, Kengeri, Bengaluru–560056, have changed my initial from **"J"** to **"V"** and shall henceforth be known as **Sudha V** for all official and personal purposes. That this affidavit is executed to declare the above facts as true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. Sworn before to me **P.N.Nagesh** Notary & Advocate, Bangalore. Date: 03.02.2026

Office of the Executive Engineer Public Works Department (PWD), Chikkamagaluru Division, Chikkamagaluru

Short Term Tender Notice No.: 30 / 2025-26 Date:31.01.2026

In the Tender Notice seen above Tender is invited from eligible contractors for total 34 works through KPP Portal under Head of Account: 5054-03-337-0-17-154 State Highways - Improvements, 5054-03-337-0-16-154 State Highways Bridges - Improvements, 3054-03-102-0-01-200 Maintenance of State Highways Bridges, 4059-80-051-0-60-132 Chief Minister's Infrastructure Development Programme other investment expenditure, 8443-00-117-0-16-542 Deposit Contribution, 3054-03-337-0-05-200 Maintenance of State Highway, 3054-04-337-1-10-200 Maintenance of District Highways, 2216-07-053-0-01-200 Repair/Maintenance of PWD Quarters and Judicial Quarters and 02 works through Manual related to Sub divisions of Public Works Department, Chikkamagaluru District. Details of capabilities to undertaking or having implemented the works (as per Standard Tender Document KW-1, 2, 3 & 4) should be attached. Contractors can be awarded the contract only if they have the minimum eligibilities as mentioned in Act 3. Minimum Approx. Amount Rs. 2.50 lakhs and Maximum Approx. Amount Rs. 500.00 lakhs. For Manual, Eligible contractors should submit application requesting blank Tender Form after paying the prescribed fee from 07.02.2026 to 10.02.2026, obtain blank Tender Form on 16.02.2026 and submit filled Tenders within 5.00 PM on 18.02.2026 and For Tender to be submitted through KPP Portal for 34 works (Indent No. 29891, 29902, 32187 (2nd Call), SE0776 (3rd Call), SE0759 (3rd Call), 29245 (4th Call) on 07.02.2026, Indent No. SE0774 (3rd Call), on 09.02.2026, Indent No. 30073, 29598 on 10.02.2026, Indent No. 32720, 32913, 32714, 32716, 32717, 32320, 32431, 32912, 32667 on 11.02.2026, Indent No. 31202, 32545, 32544, 32547, 31082, 32553, 29376, 29831, 29764, 32336, 32345, 29644, 28683, 29320 on 16.02.2026, Indent No. 30713, 32825 on 20.02.2026) tender should be submitted within 4.30 PM. For further details the case worker can be contacted during office hours.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Public Works Department (PWD), Chikkamagaluru Division, Chikkamagaluru

DIPR/smg/ksmca/25-26/152/1759

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT
ENGINEERING DIVISION KALABURAGI
PWD Quarters No: 110-D, Opp: HKES Womens Polytechnic College, Iwan-E-Shahi Colony Kalaburagi-585102 Phone/Fax No-08472 – 241982. E –mail-ee.khsdrp.klb@gmail.com

No:HFW/EE/DIVN/KLB/AE-2/tenders/2025-26/1536 Date: 31.01.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION

The Executive Engineer, H & FWD Engineering Division Kalaburagi invites tenders online in KPP portal for the following works.

Sl. No.	Description of work	Amount put to tender (Excluding GST) (Rs.In lakhs)	Earnest Money deposit (In Rs)	Category	Period of completion including Monsoon
1	Construction of Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) at Rajapura in Kalaburagi district.	**98.50**	**197000.00**	Gen	6 months
2	Construction of Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) at Santhos colony in Kalaburagi district.	**98.50**	**197000.00**	Gen	6 months
3	Construction of Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) at NayaMohalla in Kalaburagi district.	**98.50**	**197000.00**	Gen	6 months
4	Construction of Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) at Manvi in Raichur district.	**98.50**	**197000.00**	Gen	6 months

Calendar of Events: 1. Last date & time for receipt of Tender Online in the Kppp-portal : **16.02.2026 up to 16:00 hours**, 2) Last date & time for opening of technical bids: **17.02.2026 at 16.30 hours**

Note: 1) Please note henceforth any changes in the schedule will not be published through news papers & further changes will be updated only in kppp portal. 2) All the rights are reserved by the under signed for postponement or cancellation of entire tender process, rejection of bids/ individual bid etc.,without assigning any reason.

Sd/- Executive Engineer
H & FWD Engineering Division, Kalaburagi

DIPR/Kalaburagi/1046/KSMC&A/2025-26

CH CLASSIFIEDS To place a classified ad contact: 080-41209042

QUICK READ

Headmistress denied entry over Churidar

KOLLAM

A headmistress of an aided school in Kollam was stopped from entering the school on Wednesday for wearing a churidar. Security blocked her on the manager's orders around 9 am. She called the police and was allowed inside after officers arrived. Videos showed her sitting outside with eggs for midday meals. Police are recording her complaint. Officials said the manager cannot stop entry, and government rules allow churidars in schools.

IIT-Bombay student dies after hostel fall

JAIPUR

A 21-year-old IIT-Bombay student from Rajasthan, Naman Agarwal, died early Wednesday after falling from the ninth-floor terrace of Hostel No. 4. He was a second-year BTech Civil Engineering student from Pilani. Security and fellow students found him critically injured and rushed him to a hospital, where he was declared dead. Police have registered an Accidental Death Report. No suicide note was found, and statements from friends and hostel mates are being recorded to investigate the circumstances of the fall.

IFSO cracks interstate cyber fraud syndicate

NEW DELHI

The IFSO unit of Delhi Police busted an interstate cybercrime gang involved in a fake stock market scam, arresting six people and seizing nine mobile phones. The syndicate promised high returns on investments through fake trading platforms and used mule bank accounts to steal funds. The scam, orchestrated by cybercriminals abroad, came to light after a developer lost ₹3.76 crore. Raids in Mumbai, Kota, Noida, and Lucknow led to arrests.

SIR: SC seeks ECI reply on Bengal voter roll

The Supreme Court has asked the Election Commission to respond to Mamata Banerjee's petition on voter rolls

Continued from page 1

The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued a notice to the Election Commission of India (ECI) regarding a petition filed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. She has challenged the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state, claiming it is causing large-scale disenfranchisement ahead of upcoming elections. The top court has scheduled the next hearing for Monday.

Banerjee's plea requests urgent interim orders to prevent deletion of voter names, especially those listed under "logical discrepancy." Senior advocate Shyam Divan, representing her, said the SIR process is being rushed with only 11 days before final publication and just four days to address objections. He pointed out that about 32 lakh voters remain unmapped and over 1.36 crore have been flagged for discrepancies. Around 70 lakh notices have been issued for minor spelling differences, often caused by transliteration from Bengali to English. Documents such as domicile, Aadhaar, and OBC certificates are reportedly not being accepted, leaving voters waiting in long queues.

The bench, led by Chief Justice Surya Kant, observed that minor spelling variations are common nationwide and cannot justify excluding voters. Banerjee highlighted that women who change surnames after marriage and citizens who have moved residences are particularly affected. She also raised concerns about over 100 Booth Level Officers falling ill or dying due to stress.

Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, representing the ECI, explained that micro-observers were appointed as West Bengal did not provide enough officers. The court suggested reviewing minor spelling mismatches and ensuring genuine voters are not disenfranchised. The ECI must file its response by Monday, and the court assured a practical solution will be found while the broader SIR challenge continues.

Stalin criticizes BJP over Oppn MPs' suspension

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Wednesday strongly criticized the BJP-led Union government over the suspension of eight opposition MPs from the Lok Sabha, calling it undemocratic and politically motivated. He said silencing elected representatives undermines parliamentary democracy, which should be a platform for debate, accountability, and transparency.

Stalin questioned why the Centre seemed unwilling to face scrutiny on national security and governance raised by Opposition Leader Rahul Gandhi. In a social media post, he asked why the government was "fearing" the questions, stressing that MPs have a duty to raise public concerns, and the government must respond.

The suspensions followed disruptions in the Lok Sabha after Rahul Gandhi cited a memoir, sparking protests.

The Chief Minister demanded immediate revocation of the suspensions, warning that denying MPs the right to speak weakens democratic institutions and sets a troubling precedent. He emphasised that a healthy democracy requires open debate and discussion rather than curtailing dissenting voices.

The suspensions came after dramatic scenes in the Lok Sabha during the Budget session. Seven Congress MPs and one CPI-M MP were suspended for the remainder of the session for unruly conduct. The incident began when Rahul Gandhi cited parts of an unpublished memoir of former Army Chief General M.M. Naravane while questioning the 2020 India-China border conflict. The Chair disallowed the reference, prompting protests that escalated into repeated disruptions, leading to disciplinary action.

Stalin joined other opposition leaders in criticizing the move, saying Parliament should remain a forum for discussion on matters of national importance, including security and economic issues. He warned that stifling debate threatens democratic norms and accountability, reiterating that elected representatives must be allowed to participate fully in legislative proceedings to protect the interests of the public.

TN cops launch drive to register foreign nationals

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu's Central Zone police have launched a major drive to verify foreign nationals and students residing in multiple districts, ensuring compliance with the Immigration and Foreigners Act–2025. The initiative aims to strengthen monitoring and ensure property owners and institutions follow proper procedures while hosting foreign residents.

Officials are cross-checking whether hotels, guest houses, educational institutions, and property owners have submitted required details on the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) portal. Under the Act, property owners must submit Form 'C' for foreign occupants, while foreign students must complete Form 'S' with district Superintendent of Police approval.

The drive, conducted across Tiruchy, Pudukkottai, Karur, Perambalur, and Ariyalur districts, revealed 439 foreign nationals and 86 foreign students. In Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, and Mayiladuthurai districts, 32 foreign students were recorded through educational institutions. Overall, 461 foreign nationals are staying in the Central Zone, with 380 already registered. Authorities are following up with the remaining 81 individuals.

Police have instructed hotels, homestays, hospitals, and institutions to upload details of foreign occupants within 24 hours of arrival. Pending registrations must be completed within a short compliance window, or individuals face fines of Rs 50,000 for Form 'C' violations and Rs 1 lakh for Form 'S' lapses.

Senior officers said the initiative is designed not only to enforce legal provisions but also to maintain accurate records for security and administrative purposes, ensuring better coordination between local police and immigration authorities. The drive highlights the state's focus on orderly monitoring and accountability of foreign residents across Tamil Nadu.

Kamal calls for progressive democracy rooted in cinema

NEW DELHI

Veteran actor and Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) President Kamal Haasan made his first speech in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday during discussions on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address.

The speech highlighted his journey from cinema to Parliament and his vision for a progressive, inclusive democracy.

Haasan, from Paramakudi in Tamil Nadu, thanked Chief Minister M.K. Stalin for his support and credited thinkers like Periyar, C.N. Annadurai, and Mahatma Gandhi for shaping his language, thought, and political outlook. "Many doors open for people to serve the public, and mine opened through cinema," he said, recounting how films introduced him to Tamil history and the realities of India's democratic promises.

Gujarat toddler swallows hulk toy, saved by docs

AHMEDABAD

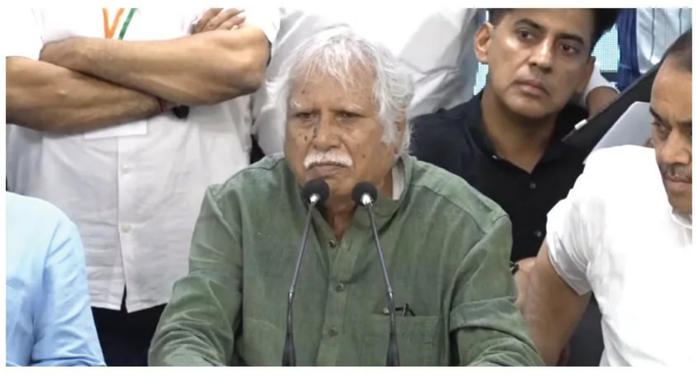
A one-and-a-half-year-old boy from Ahmedabad, Gujarat, was recently rushed to Civil Hospital after accidentally swallowing his toy, a plastic "Hulk" figure, his parents reported. The child's mother noticed he was vomiting and realized one of his toys was missing, prompting immediate medical attention.

Dr. Rakesh Joshi, Head of Pediatric Surgery, said the toy had lodged in the boy's stomach and could have caused serious internal injuries. "Had it moved to the intestines, there was a risk of blockage or rupture," he explained.

Doctors performed an X-ray to locate the toy, followed by a complex upper gastrointestinal endoscopy to remove it. The procedure involved carefully extracting the full-sized plastic character, complete with arms, legs, and head, through the natural valve connecting the oesophagus and stomach. According to Dr. Joshi, the toy repeatedly slipped due to air in the stomach, and pulling it by its limbs risked permanent damage to the valve.

The surgery, conducted on January 19, was successful, and the child has fully recovered. Medical experts emphasized that young children often put objects in their mouths, which can lead to serious health risks. They urged parents to monitor toddlers closely and keep small or potentially dangerous items out of reach.

The hospital said this case highlights the importance of timely medical intervention and careful endoscopic techniques in handling unusual but potentially life-threatening emergencies among children. The family expressed relief and gratitude to the medical team for saving their child.



Cong high command to decide MPs' Kerala polls

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress high command will make the final decision on whether sitting party MPs can contest the upcoming Kerala Assembly elections, Screening Committee Chairman Madhusudan Mistry said on Wednesday.

He noted that the matter involves broader policy considerations and multiple factors will be reviewed before finalising candidates.

Mistry expressed confidence that the leadership would take an appropriate view and indicated that the Congress candidate list is likely to be released by the end of the month. He said it was too early to say whether survey reports on sitting MLAs would influence the decisions, adding that "various aspects will be scrutinised in detail during the selection process."

Mistry is in Kerala to chair screening committee meetings and consult with party leaders at different levels. He will meet senior leaders over the next two days. Earlier, District Congress Committee Presidents submitted panels of probable candidates, which will guide the committee's deliberations.

The announcement of the first candidate list may coincide with the statewide yatra of Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan, a move closely watched by political observers. In addition to candidate finalisation, the state Congress has begun seat-sharing talks with allies in the United Democratic Front (UDF).

In the 140-member Assembly, Congress had contested 93 seats in 2021. Other UDF partners included the IUML (25 seats), Kerala Congress-M (10), RSP (5), NCK (2), Kerala Congress-Jacob, CMP, and RMPI (one seat each), along with two supported Independents. This time, the Forward Bloc may get one seat, and two-time former Left-backed independent P.V. Anvar has been cleared to contest from Beypore.

Daughter pens emotional note for late pilot father

BARAMATI

Sanya Kapur Wadhwa, daughter of Captain Sumit Kapur, the pilot of the ill-fated flight carrying Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, shared an emotional note on social media remembering her father. The crash at Baramati airport on January 28 claimed the lives of all five people on board, including the two crew members.

In her heartfelt Instagram post, Sanya expressed pride in her father's aviation career, writing, "Papa has flown Hon'ble Ajit Sir and other esteemed dignitaries, Hon'ble ministers and superstars of this country a couple of times… For the last five years, I found him flying some new superstar, Hon'ble ministers or other Hon'ble persons of India and always used to tell him I am so proud of you, Papa."

She added, "I am proud of you, Papa, and I always will be. I just miss you a lot. Best-est Papa." Earlier, she posted pictures with her father, describing the incident as a "bad dream" and wrote, "I am still trying to wrap my head around this… I love you and I always will be a papa ki pari." Captain Sumit Kapur, the senior-most crew member, was responsible for all critical decisions during the flight, including landing and emergency management. First Officer Shambhavi Pathak was also on board. The aircraft crash occurred during landing at Baramati airport, resulting in the death of all five occupants.

TRIBUTE TO DADA

Majhi Ladki Bahin Scheme may honour Pawar

MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has said he will consider naming the Mukhya Mantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana after the late Ajit Pawar. The decision follows a demand by NCP MLA Amol Mitari, a close aide of Pawar, to honor the former deputy chief minister and state finance minister who died in a plane crash on January 28, 2026, in his hometown of Baramati, Pune district.

Ajit Pawar, popularly called Dada, was 66. Mitari said Pawar's devotion to women's welfare was evident during his travels across Maharashtra, and naming the scheme "Ajit-dadanchi Ladki Bahin Yojana" would be a fitting tribute. Speaking in Haridwar, Fadnavis acknowledged the demand but said the government will discuss multiple proposals before taking a decision.

The Mukhya Mantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana was launched in July 2024 by the Maha Yuti government, led by Eknath Shinde, ahead of the state assembly elections. The scheme provides Rs 1,500 per month to eligible women aged 21-60 years. It aims to promote economic independence, self-reliance, health, and nutrition among women.

Under the program, women receive financial support to enhance their overall development, encouraging participation in social and economic activities. The initiative has been popular among women across the state and contributed to public goodwill during elections.

If renamed, the scheme will serve both as financial aid to women and a tribute to Pawar's contribution to Maharashtra's development. Officials indicated that discussions are ongoing, and a final decision is expected soon, balancing the tribute with practical administration of the welfare program.

QUICK READ

Quake jolts Tibet region causing concern

LHASA

Tibet experienced a 4.5-magnitude earthquake on Wednesday, reported the National Center for Seismology. The quake occurred 110 km deep. This follows a smaller 3.2-magnitude tremor on Tuesday at a shallow 10 km depth, which could trigger aftershocks. Shallow earthquakes are usually more damaging than deeper ones. Tibet lies on a major fault line where the Indian plate collides with the Eurasian plate, making the region seismically active. Authorities continue monitoring for further activity.

Turkish flight engine catches fire midflight

KATHMANDU

A Turkish Airlines flight from Kathmandu to Istanbul faced an engine fire shortly after takeoff on Wednesday. The right engine caught fire four minutes after departure, prompting an emergency. Pilots shut down the engine and diverted the plane, safely landing at Kolkata airport with 236 people onboard. Tribhuvan Airport was briefly closed for 15 minutes. Authorities say the A330 aircraft is now under inspection. Passengers and crew are reported safe, and the cause of the engine fire is being investigated.

Baloch conflict shows Pak security strain

NEW DELHI

The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed it killed at least 280 Pakistani personnel during Phase II of "Operation Herof." Reports say many Pakistani forces are retreating, unable to match the BLA's tactics. The BLA lost 35 fighters, including 18 suicide attackers. Indian officials noted that the conflict has lasted nearly 60 years but is now the most intense. Critics say Pakistan's leadership relied on force instead of talks with Baloch leaders, leaving its security forces overstretched and vulnerable.

Trump signs bill ending partial Fed shutdown

Trump signed the funding package into law this afternoon, ending a brief shutdown that started on Saturday

WASHINGTON DC

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday afternoon signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, officially ending the partial federal government shutdown after three days. Speaking in the Oval Office, Trump said he was "thrilled" to reopen most government operations for the rest of the fiscal year. The bill restores funding to many critical departments but sets a new funding deadline for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in two weeks.

The US House approved the package 217-214 after weeks of negotiations. While most Democrats opposed the bill, 21 voted in favor, and 21 Republicans voted against it. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries emphasized that without major reforms at DHS, a full-year appropriations bill could face serious challenges.

The legislation ensures Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Transportation Security Administration, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) continue operating smoothly. ICE and other DHS programs had been relying on $170 billion appropriated under last year's Republican tax and spending law. Trump praised House Speaker Mike Johnson for his leadership in passing the bill, calling it "incredible work." Johnson highlighted the importance of DHS functions beyond immigration and urged bipartisan cooperation to prevent another shutdown in two weeks.

Officials now hope the temporary funding solution buys time for lawmakers to negotiate reforms and long-term appropriations. Analysts say the bill demonstrates political compromise, though the looming DHS deadline signals continued tension in Congress over federal spending priorities.

WHAT TO KNOW TODAY

SHUTDOWN ENDS: The House passed a massive funding package to end the brief government shutdown that began Saturday. President Donald Trump signed the measure into law hours later.

TRUMP-PETRO MEETING: Trump held his first meeting with Colombian President Gustavo Petro at the White House. The two leaders, who have traded insults and threats over the past year, struck an unexpectedly friendly tone after their sit-down.

ELECTIONS DEBATE: Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said he is "not in favor" of federalizing elections a day after Trump said on a podcast that Republicans "ought to nationalize the voting."

GUN RIGHTS BACKLASH: U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro, the top federal prosecutor in the District of Columbia, faces widespread criticism from conservatives after she said in a Fox News interview yesterday that anyone who brings a gun into the nation's capital would face jail time.

India-Saudi step up counter-terror efforts

RIYADH

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval held a key meeting with Saudi Minister of State and National Security Adviser Musaed bin Mohammed Al-Aiban on Wednesday in Riyadh. The discussions focused on bilateral cooperation, regional issues, and other shared interests.

Doval, who arrived in Riyadh on Tuesday, was welcomed by India's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Dr. Suhel Ajaz Khan, and Saudi Deputy Minister for Political Affairs, Dr. Saud Al-Sati. His visit underscores the growing strategic partnership between the two countries.

The meeting comes after Saudi Arabia strongly condemned the January terror attacks in Pahalgam and near the Red Fort. During the 3rd India-Saudi Arabia Security Working Group meeting on January 28, both nations reaffirmed their opposition to terrorism, including cross-border attacks and threats against civilians. The two sides reviewed ongoing security cooperation and exchanged views on countering extremism, radicalization, terrorist financing, and transnational organized crime. They also discussed ways to strengthen bilateral legal, judicial, and law enforcement collaboration. Officials said the next Security Working Group meeting will be held in India at a mutually convenient date. Earlier, Indian officials met resident Arab Ambassadors to assess ongoing cooperation and prepare for future strategic and sectoral partnerships, ensuring stronger regional ties and mutual security interests.

Doval's visit highlights India and Saudi Arabia's commitment to enhancing security coordination, counter-terrorism efforts, and long-term strategic collaboration in the region, reinforcing their mutual resolve against emerging threats.

POINTS TO BE NOTED

- India-Saudi high-level security dialogue in Riyadh
- Condemnation of recent terror attacks in India
- Review of counter-terrorism cooperation
- Focus on combating terror financing & tech misuse

India reinforces UNDP ties for sustainable development

NEW YORK

India has underlined its commitment to strengthening cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) during the Executive Board session. Ambassador Harish P, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, emphasized six decades of partnership with UNDP, particularly in areas such as poverty reduction, climate resilience, SDG localization, and sustainability through the LiFE initiative. Ambassador Harish stressed that UN reforms should prioritize development and enhance South-South cooperation within the UN system. The Indian mission highlighted the India-UN Development Partnership Fund as a key platform supporting collaborative projects and advancing global development goals.

The discussions came as India continues to expand its role in international institutions. On October 15, 2025, India was elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for the seventh time, serving the 2026–28 term. Ambassador Harish thanked member states for their support, noting the election reflects India's ongoing commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The UNHRC, composed of 47 member states, is the primary intergovernmental body addressing human rights globally. It works to strengthen human rights protection, respond to emergencies, and provide guidance on implementing human rights policies on the ground.

India's dual focus on sustainable development and human rights reflects its strategic vision of promoting inclusive growth and global responsibility. By reinforcing UNDP partnerships and participating actively in the Human Rights Council, India aims to contribute effectively to international development, climate action, and human rights protection worldwide.

AL banned, BNP narrowly leads Jamaat-e-Islami

DHAKA

Bangladesh's national election on February 12, 2026, is shaping up as a historic and unpredictable contest, with the Awami League (AL) barred from participating and the BNP-Jamaat alliance gaining ground.

According to the International Crisis Group, the electoral landscape has shifted dramatically, making outcomes uncertain.

The 2026 polls are the first since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government fell in August 2024. With over 127 million eligible voters, many will cast ballots in a truly competitive election for the first time. The AL's ban and suspension have effectively disenfranchised millions of supporters. In May 2025, citing security concerns, the interim government restricted AL activities until the International Crimes Tribunal concluded cases against party leaders. In November 2025, Hasina was convicted in absentia of crimes against humanity and sentenced to death. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) holds a narrow lead over Jamaat-e-Islami, which is poised to surpass its 1991 record. The BNP, one of the country's two main parties, has faced criticism over alleged extortion, corruption, and internal conflicts over candidate selection. Jamaat-e-Islami has been gaining influence through social media campaigns, anti-India rhetoric, and mobilization of the Muslim electorate.

The election is also taking place amid heightened violence, with at least 16 politicians killed since the schedule was announced. Over 900,000 security personnel have been deployed to maintain order. The absence of the Awami League, a major political force, ensures that the vote will be closely contested between the BNP and Jamaat, shaping Bangladesh's political future in uncertain times.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

6					9			4
	8	9	5				1	6
5				6		3		9
8		1			4	7		5
	2		7		8		6	
9		7		3		8		2
	5		9		7		3	
3		8		5		9		1
1				8			5	

3	8	7	9	6	4	2	1	5
5	4	9	2	1	8	7	3	6
1	6	2	3	7	5	9	8	4
4	2	6	8	9	3	5	7	1
9	1	8	5	4	7	6	2	3
7	5	3	1	2	6	8	4	9
6	3	5	7	8	1	4	9	2
2	7	4	6	3	9	1	5	8
8	9	1	4	5	2	3	6	7

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

Baloch rights body alleges Pak targets chairman's family

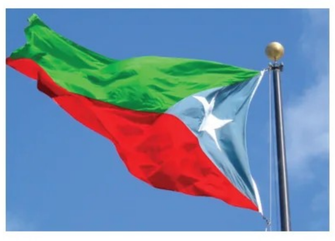
QUETTA

The Baloch National Movement (BNM) has raised serious concerns over the enforced disappearance of its Chairman Naseem Baloch's father and close relatives by Pakistani forces, describing it as part of a long-standing policy of collective punishment against the Baloch people.

In the early hours of February 2, the Pakistan Army abducted Muhammad Bakhsh Sajdi, Naseem Baloch's father, along with his uncles Naeem Sajdi and Rafiq Baloch in the Hub region. The party alleged that such actions are not isolated incidents but a systematic tool of repression targeting families of political activists across Balochistan.

The BNM accused Pakistani authorities of using extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, drone attacks, aerial bombardments, and restrictions on political, social, and academic activities to suppress Baloch society. Recent statements by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and the provincial Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, proposing deployment of additional troops, have further fueled fears of escalating military action.

Highlighting ongoing human rights violations, the BNM warned that international inaction emboldens Pakistan to commit abuses with impunity, describing the situation as amounting to genocide. The party urged the global community to hold Pakistan accountable and review trade and investment partnerships, particularly projects in Balochistan.



SOARING TROUBLE

NZ unemployment rises to 5.4%, highest since 2015

WELLINGTON

New Zealand's unemployment rate increased to 5.4 per cent in the December 2025 quarter, marking the highest level in over a decade, Stats NZ reported Wednesday. The last comparable peak was 5.7 per cent in September 2015.

The number of unemployed rose by 5,000 to 165,000, while employment and labour market participation also increased. The labour force participation rate reached 70.5 per cent, with 19,000 more people actively seeking work. "We saw higher engagement in the labour market as both employment and unemployment increased," said macroeconomic spokesperson Jason Attewell.

Key points

- NZ Unemployment hits 5.4%, highest since 2015
- Labour force participation rises to 70.5%
- Female employment grows in managerial roles
- Household living costs rise 2.2% annually

Female participation rose, with about 20,000 more women joining the workforce and 16,000 gaining employment. Growth was notable in managerial and professional roles, while clerical and administrative positions declined. Overall, the employment rate stood at 66.7 per cent, underutilization at 13 per cent, annual wage inflation at 2 per cent, and average hourly earnings at NZ$43.99 (US$26.59).

Stats NZ also reported household living costs rose 2.2 per cent year-on-year to December 2025. The Household Living Price Index (HLPI), which includes interest payments, moderated after peaking at 8.2 per cent in 2022. The consumer price index (CPI), measuring broader inflation including home building costs, rose 3.1 per cent.

Superannuitant households faced the highest inflation at 3.8 per cent, driven by local authority rates, electricity, and health insurance. The highest-spending households saw the lowest increase of 0.8 per cent, thanks to an 18.6 per cent fall in mortgage interest payments. Rent rose 1.9 per cent, significantly affecting beneficiary and Maori households.

QUICK READ

Dollar fall may spark global recession shock

Mumbai

A report by BofA Securities warned that a sharp and long fall in the US dollar could hurt the global economy outside the United States. A weaker dollar may slow growth abroad and create deflation, forcing many countries to cut interest rates. This could limit further dollar decline. The report said an uncontrolled fall would harm trade, investment, and markets. While the dollar may weaken slightly, a major drop would be damaging worldwide.

India joins BRICS industrial skills centre

New Delhi

India has joined the BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies to support manufacturing firms and MSMEs. The move was announced at an event organised by DPIIT in the capital. The centre, set up with UNIDO, offers support services and focuses on Industry 4.0 skills. A trust fund agreement was signed between DPIIT and UNIDO to confirm India's role. The National Productivity Council will act as India's nodal centre.

India services PMI rises, hiring picks up

New Delhi

India's services sector showed stronger growth in January as the Services PMI rose to 58.5 from 58.0 in December, S&P Global data showed. The rise was driven by higher demand, more new orders, and increased output. Service firms were more confident about the future and hired more staff. Input costs and selling prices rose at a moderate pace. Business optimism improved due to better efficiency, new clients, and steady domestic and overseas demand.

India–US trade deal boosts exports, protects sectors: Goyal

He said the sensitive sectors of the country, like agriculture and dairy, are completely protected in the India-US trade deal

NEW DELHI

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said the India-US trade deal supports exports while protecting sensitive domestic sectors.

He told the Lok Sabha that India and the United States are complementary economies and both gain from deeper trade ties. Talks on a bilateral trade agreement began after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's US visit in February 2025 and continued for nearly a year. The deal was announced after a phone call between Modi and US President Donald Trump on February 2.

Goyal said negotiators from both sides protected important

areas such as agriculture and dairy. At the same time, they ensured better market access and lower tariffs than those faced by competing countries. This, he said, will improve India's export competitiveness, especially for labour intensive and manufacturing sectors.

The minister added that the agreement will open new opportunities for MSMEs, skilled workers, and industries by easing access to advanced technologies. He said the partnership supports India's goal of Viksit Bharat 2047 and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Goyal also spoke on energy imports, saying energy security for India's population remains the top priority. He said cooperation with the US in energy, aviation, data centres, and nuclear power is natural. Tariffs on Indian goods have been reduced.

'Agri, dairy completely protected'

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal told the Lok Sabha that India's farmers' interests are protected in the India-US trade deal, as agriculture and dairy are excluded. He said sensitive sectors were safeguarded while creating opportunities for MSMEs, skilled workers, and industry, and ensuring energy security for 140 crore Indians. The deal will ease access to advanced technologies and support Make, Design, and Innovate in India. His remarks came amid opposition protests that disrupted House proceedings

USISPF hosts CEA for post-budget investment dialogue

The US-India Strategic Partnership Forum held a post-budget discussion with India's Chief Economic Advisor to review reforms, investment outlook, and economic resilience after the Union Budget

NEW DELHI

The US-India Strategic Partnership Forum hosted Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran for a post-budget dialogue to discuss India's growth plans and investment outlook. The interaction focused on economic resilience, fiscal priorities, and measures announced in the Union Budget 2026.

USISPF said the Budget signals stability through tax certainty, easier compliance rules, and a forward looking policy framework. Industry leaders discussed how these steps could translate into higher investment, innovation, and long term confidence. The meeting was attended by senior officials from the US Embassy and members of USISPF's India Board.

The forum earlier welcomed the Union Budget 2026-27, calling it a balanced roadmap to boost competitiveness and ease of doing business. It praised steps on trade facilitation, customs reform, tariff rationalisation, and banking sector improvements. USISPF highlighted digital customs systems, AI based inspections, and faster cargo movement at ports. These reforms are expected to cut delays, improve transparency, and lower logistics costs for businesses.

USISPF President Mukesh Aghi said the Budget modernises India's economy and supports future growth. He welcomed the tax holiday for cloud services using local data centres, calling it a major boost for jobs. Aghi said support for AI, IT, and data centres will help India become a global digital hub. He added that USISPF looks forward to working closely with the government to deepen US-India economic ties.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget in Parliament on February 1. She said the Budget is driven by youth power and clear duties to support long term development. The dialogue reflected shared goals to strengthen reforms, attract global capital, encourage innovation, and build a resilient economy that supports sustainable growth, jobs, and stronger cooperation between India and the United States. Such engagement signals confidence in India's policy direction after the latest Budget announcement today.

Ikea India FY25 loss widens, revenue down

MUMBAI

Ikea India, the local unit of Swedish home furnishings giant Ikea, reported a net loss of Rs 1,325.2 crore for the financial year ending March 31, 2025, up from Rs 1,299.4 crore in FY24. Revenue from operations declined 3.33 per cent to Rs 1,749.5 crore, while total income, including other sources, fell 3.9 per cent to Rs 1,780.1 crore.

Despite lower revenue, the company increased spending on advertising and sales promotions by 14.06 per cent, reaching Rs 223.9 crore, as it seeks to strengthen its brand and boost sales across channels. Ikea India's total borrowings rose sharply to Rs 8,335.2 crore from Rs 7,060 crore in FY24, reflecting continued investment in its omnichannel expansion strategy.

Currently, Ikea operates three large-format stores in Hyderabad, Navi Mumbai, and Bengaluru, along with two city stores in Mumbai's Worli and New Delhi. Plans are underway to open two stores each in Gurugram and Noida, with an estimated Rs 7,000 crore investment in the National Capital Region.

Ingka Holding Overseas BV, Netherlands, holds a 99.9 per cent equity stake in Ikea India. Since 2013, the government had approved a total FDI of Rs 10,500 crore for setting up ten stores and related infrastructure.

Semicon India gains pace, IT revenue touches $283 bn

NEW DELHI

India's push to build a strong semiconductor base is advancing steadily, alongside continued growth in the information technology sector.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said the Semicon India Programme is moving ahead quickly, with ten major projects approved so far. The programme, with an outlay of Rs 76,000 crore, aims to create a complete ecosystem for chip manufacturing in the country. These approved projects together involve investments of about Rs 1.6 lakh crore.

The ministry said the projects include two semiconductor fabrication units and eight packaging units. These facilities will work on key technologies such as CMOS silicon chips, silicon carbide chips, advanced packaging, and memory packaging. While construction is ongoing at most locations, pilot production has already begun at four units, marking an important step for domestic chip manufacturing.

The programme is also supporting innovation and skills. So far, 24 chip design projects led by startups have received government support. Out of these, 16 have completed tapeouts, and 13 have attracted venture capital funding, showing rising investor confidence. In addition, 350 universities have been given access to specialised chip design tools, which are currently used by around 65,000 engineers.

The India Semiconductor Mission is managing the initiative with support from industry experts and government departments. Major approved projects include Tata Electronics' fab in Gujarat, a packaging unit in Assam, and partnerships with global firms like Micron and Renesas.

Alongside this, India's IT sector continues to expand. NASSCOM estimates sector revenue will reach $283 billion in 2024-25. The government is promoting IT growth in smaller cities to spread digital benefits nationwide.

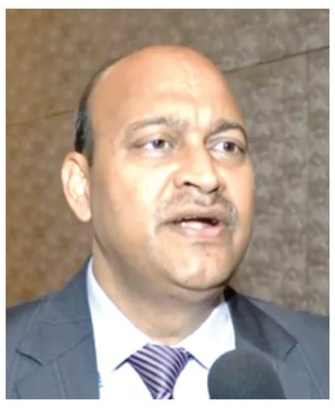
Full FDI insurance boosts regulators, sector growth: LIC

MUMBAI

LIC Managing Director Dinesh Pant said the government's decision to allow 100 per cent foreign direct investment in insurance has strengthened the role of regulators and improved oversight of the sector. He said recent announcements in Budget 2026 show clear intent to recognise insurance as a key driver of economic growth and a tool to reduce India's protection gap.

Pant said the government remains focused on achieving the goal of Insurance for All by 2047. He added that policy steps such as the insurance amendment bill and GST changes underline the importance given to the industry. The amendment bill, cleared in December, allows 100 per cent FDI, lowers net worth requirements for insurers, and gives greater authority to regulators.

Pant welcomed the reduction of GST on individual life and health insurance from 18 per cent to zero, effective September 22, 2025. He said this move makes insurance more affordable and allows companies to pass on savings to customers. All individual life policies and health cov-



ers, including senior citizen plans, are now exempt from GST.

He said the government is also encouraging insurers to review cost structures and improve service quality, especially distribution expenses. Commenting on Budget 2026, Pant noted the rise in capital expenditure to Rs 12.2 lakh crore from Rs 11.4 lakh crore. He said high utilisation of capex supports infrastructure growth and has wider economic benefits.

On the outlook, Pant said GDP growth for FY27 is projected at 7.4 per cent. He added that despite global volatility and a weaker rupee, India's economic fundamentals remain strong. He expressed confidence in term policy stability.

SEBI aims to strengthen corporate bond market growth

NEW DELHI

SEBI Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey said the regulator is working to deepen India's corporate bond market. Speaking at the pan-India outreach program for corporate bonds, he outlined a three-pronged approach: improve primary issuances, enhance secondary market liquidity, and increase investor awareness. Pandey said these steps will help strengthen funding for industries and services while providing more investment options for investors.

The corporate bond market has grown rapidly, with outstanding bonds reaching Rs 58 lakh crore from Rs 17 lakh crore, reflecting a 12 per cent CAGR. Bonds now account for 60 per cent of industrial funding, up from 40 per cent earlier.

Pandey also highlighted municipal bonds as an emerging option for urban infrastructure finance. While only 12 municipal bonds have been issued so far, he said the market has high potential. To protect investors, revenues are held in escrow, ensuring only financially stable municipalities can issue bonds.

To attract foreign portfolio investors, SEBI is reducing trade frictions and regulatory uncertainties. Measures include digital document submission, simplified block deals, and a consultation paper on netting to streamline operations. Pandey said removing regulatory barriers can accelerate capital formation.

The Chairman stressed the importance of retail investor participation. With 138 million investors in India, SEBI aims to guide those hesitant about equity risks to diversify into bonds. He said educating investors on market access and risk profiles is key to making the bond market more inclusive and robust, supporting sustainable economic growth and infrastructure financing.

India secures EU market for seafood, dairy, honey exports

NEW DELHI

India has safeguarded its billion-dollar seafood, honey, and dairy exports as the EU enforces stricter antibiotic rules.

Indian exporters have successfully retained access to the European Union market under the EU's new Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) rules. These regulations, effective September 2026, require exporting countries to demonstrate strict monitoring of animal-origin products. Without compliance, India's seafood, honey, eggs, and dairy exports could have faced suspension. Seafood exports alone to the EU are valued at around USD 1.125 billion.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry credited the Export Inspection Council (EIC) and the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) for modernising India's inspection, testing, and certification systems. The upgraded "Official Control System" now meets EU standards, ensuring products are free from prohibited antibiotic residues. Officials said this alignment was key to convincing EU authorities to maintain India's market access.

The agreement includes conditional provisions for milk and poultry products, which will remain under closer monitoring until fully compliant. The Ministry highlighted that sustained government efforts and timely technical interventions helped India meet the EU's enhanced standards.

Looking ahead, the government plans to maintain close coordination with EU-approved establishments and regulatory authorities to ensure smooth implementation of the new rules. By proactively upgrading domestic monitoring and certification systems, India has secured uninterrupted exports while strengthening its global trade credibility.

This achievement protects crucial sectors, maintains trade revenue, and positions India as a reliable supplier of animal-origin products to the EU, even under tighter international safety standards.

SaaS AI surge triggers global IT stocks sell-off

NEW DELHI

Indian IT stocks slid sharply on Wednesday after US AI firm Anthropic expanded its enterprise AI assistant with a new automation layer capable of managing end-to-end business workflows, fuelling fears of widespread disruption to the software industry, dubbed the "SaaSpocalypse."

Infosys shares fell 8.36 per cent and Wipro dropped 4.45 per cent intraday, with their US-listed shares also declining. Global consulting majors Accenture and Cognizant lost nearly double digits. Software firms including Salesforce, Adobe and DocuSign, along with legal-tech players such as LegalZoom and Thomson Reuters, were hit as investors worried AI automation could reduce demand for traditional SaaS products.

Anthropic's upgrade enables automation plugins to execute full operational processes on a single platform. PL Capital's Vikram Kasat said sentiment has turned bearish, prompting rapid exits from software stocks.

AADHAAR CLEANUP

Govt deactivates 2.5 cr Aadhaar IDs of deceased to avoid fraud

NEW DELHI

The government has deactivated over 2.5 crore Aadhaar numbers linked to deceased people to prevent fraud and misuse. The move was confirmed in Parliament by Minister of State for Electronics and IT Jitin Prasada.

He said removing inactive records is vital to protect the accuracy of the Aadhaar system, the world's largest biometric database.

Officials explained that Aadhaar numbers must be cancelled after death to stop identity fraud and illegal access to welfare benefits. With nearly 134 crore active Aadhaar holders, keeping records updated is a major challenge. Deaths are often registered in places different from Aadhaar addresses, making coordinated action important.

The exercise is part of a wider effort to ensure subsidies and services reach only genuine, living beneficiaries. The government said regular data cleaning helps close gaps that could be exploited by fraudsters.

Several security features are already in place. Aadhaar users can lock and unlock biometric data to block unauthorised access. Face authentication now includes liveness detection to confirm a real person is present and prevent fake attempts. Entities using Aadhaar must store numbers in encrypted Aadhaar Data Vaults.

The ministry stressed that UIDAI does not share core biometric data with any third party. For offline use, secure QR codes and paperless e-KYC reduce risk while allowing easy verification.

To help families update records, a new Aadhaar app allows secure sharing of credentials and reporting of deaths. Officials said regular de-duplication and deactivation will keep Aadhaar reliable, secure, and free from leaks, strengthening trust in digital public services across India. Authorities said the process will continue nationwide with states, hospitals, and families cooperating closely together.

FARMERS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF INDIA

1. The Rural Heartbeat of a Growing Nation

India's villages form the emotional and economic backbone of the country, and farmers stand at the center of this rural pulse. Rising before sunrise, they sustain a population of more than 1.4 billion while anchoring India's development journey. As the nation moves toward global economic prominence, the sustainability of this growth depends heavily on agriculture. Farmers are no longer only food producers; they are decision-makers whose choices influence equity, environmental balance, and long-term prosperity. Their resilience and evolving role ensure that progress remains rooted in inclusivity and food security.

2. Agriculture at a Crossroads of Economy and Employment

Indian agriculture reflects a striking contradiction—while contributing about 18 percent to GDP, it employs nearly half the workforce. This imbalance exposes structural challenges but also immense opportunity. Farmers today navigate a complex intersection of traditional wisdom, modern technology, climate uncertainty, and volatile markets. Productivity must increase without exhausting resources, and incomes must rise without excluding smallholders. How farmers adapt to these pressures will shape rural livelihoods and national stability. This moment represents a turning point where innovation and policy must align with grassroots realities.

3. Tradition Meets Technology in Indian Farming

Agriculture in India is deeply cultural, shaped by centuries of tradition, festivals, and collective memory. Yet today's farmers blend this heritage with modern tools. The monsoon is still revered, but weather apps and satellite forecasts now guide planting decisions. This coexistence of ancient practices and digital solutions defines contemporary farming. Respect for ancestral knowledge strengthens adaptability, while technology improves efficiency and resilience. Indian farmers demonstrate that progress does not require abandoning tradition—it thrives when the past and present work together.

4. Lessons from the Green Revolution

The Green Revolution transformed India from a food-deficient nation into a self-sufficient one. High-yield crops, scientific research, and farmer participation drove historic gains. However, long-term consequences such as soil degradation, water depletion, and chemical dependency emerged. Today's farmers must sustain productivity while repairing ecological damage. They act as cultivators, scientists, and environmental stewards simultaneously. This phase of Indian agriculture demands smarter inputs, balanced practices, and sustainable innovation to ensure food security without sacrificing natural resources.

5. Farming in the Age of Climate Uncertainty

Climate change poses the greatest threat to Indian agriculture, disrupting rainfall, seasons, and crop reliability. Farmers are responding with innovation—adopting drought-resistant varieties, micro-irrigation, and crop diversification. Traditional methods like watershed management are being revived alongside modern solutions. Shifts away from water-intensive crops reflect growing environmental awareness. These adaptations reveal farmers as frontline climate responders, whose choices today will determine agricultural resilience and resource availability for future generations.

6. The Digital Transformation of Indian Farms

Technology is reshaping Indian agriculture at unprecedented speed. GPS-based precision farming, drones, soil sensors, and mobile apps enable smarter decision-making. Farmers now access real-time weather updates, market prices, and advisory services through smartphones. Even smallholders benefit from digital tools that reduce costs and increase yields. Technology has become a powerful equalizer, narrowing information gaps and improving profitability. The digital farm is no longer a concept—it is a lived reality across rural India.

7. Organic Farming and Sustainable Choices

Organic farming represents a shift toward ecological balance and market opportunity. Sikkim's transition into India's first fully organic state proved that sustainability and success can coexist. Despite initial challenges, organic farming improved soil health and opened premium markets. Inspired by this model, farmers nationwide are embracing chemical-free cultivation. This movement reflects a deeper philosophy—recognizing soil, biodiversity, and human health as interconnected. Organic farming signals a future where agriculture works with nature, not against it.

8. Women as Catalysts of Agricultural Change

Women form a vital yet historically underrecognized force in Indian agriculture. From sowing to post-harvest processing, their contributions are immense. Increasing access to land rights, credit, and training is transforming women into agricultural leaders. Self-help groups and cooperatives empower women-led enterprises, particularly in dairy, horticulture, and food processing. Their leadership often emphasizes sustainability and community welfare. Recognizing women farmers is not just social justice—it strengthens agricultural productivity and rural resilience.

9. Collective Power of Small and Marginal Farmers

Small and marginal farmers face persistent challenges—fragmented land, price volatility, limited credit, and poor infrastructure. Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) are changing this reality through collective strength. By aggregating produce, accessing inputs at scale, and investing in shared infrastructure, farmers improve bargaining power and incomes. These cooperatives redefine agricultural economics, replacing isolation with collaboration. FPOs offer a scalable solution for inclusive growth and economic stability in rural India.

10. Farmers as Entrepreneurs and Market Leaders

Direct marketing, contract farming, and value addition are transforming farmers into entrepreneurs. Partnerships with retailers, processors, and restaurants provide assured markets and better prices. Some farmers now operate brands, processing units, and direct-to-consumer platforms. This shift creates rural employment and demonstrates that farming can be profitable and aspirational. By controlling more of the value chain, farmers reclaim economic dignity and reshape rural business ecosystems.

11. Natural Farming and Ecological Renewal

Zero Budget Natural Farming and similar approaches reduce dependence on costly chemical inputs. Using local resources and natural processes, farmers lower expenses while improving soil health and climate resilience. Thousands across southern and hill states report higher profitability and crop quality. Natural farming redefines success—prioritizing sustainability, resilience, and long-term ecological balance. It reflects a fundamental rethinking of productivity beyond short-term yield metrics.

12. Cultivating Knowledge and the Next Generation

Knowledge-sharing has accelerated through farmer networks, social media, and digital platforms.

Innovations spread rapidly across regions, strengthening collective learning. At the same time, attracting youth to agriculture is essential. Startups, mechanization, and agritech innovations are making farming more appealing. When young people see agriculture as a field of innovation and impact, the future becomes brighter. Farmers, old and young, are shaping a sector rooted in wisdom and driven by possibility.

Bencic, Svitolina make history as mothers inside tennis top 10

MELBOURNE

Belinda Bencic and Elina Svitolina become first mothers together inside WTA top 10.

Belinda Bencic and Elina Svitolina have created a landmark moment in women's tennis by becoming the first mothers to be ranked inside the WTA top 10 at the same time, a milestone hailed as a breakthrough for the sport.

Switzerland's Bencic returned to the elite bracket in January for the first time since stepping away from competition in September 2023 to give birth to her daughter, Bella. In the latest rankings released on Monday, she was joined by Ukraine's Svitolina, who climbed into the top 10 following her impressive run to the semifinals of the Australian Open.

Svitolina, the mother of daughter Skai, sealed her return to the upper echelon with a string of strong performances in Melbourne, underlining her successful comeback after maternity leave. The achievement of the two players together marks an unprecedented moment in WTA history.

"Two mothers ranked inside the WTA's Top 10 rankings for the first time is an incredible moment for tennis and for women's sport," said WTA chief executive Portia Archer. She added that the milestone reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to ensuring women can balance elite sport and motherhood without sacrificing either.

The WTA's Family Focus Program has played a key role in enabling such comebacks. The initiative offers ranking protection during pregnancy, postpartum support, assistance with returning to competition, and paid maternity leave, allowing players to resume their careers with greater security.

Bencic, currently ranked ninth, said her return to the top tier was deeply personal. "Coming back to the Top 10 one year after returning from maternity leave is something I am incredibly proud of," she said, describing the journey as physically and mentally demanding.

World number 10 Svitolina echoed those sentiments. "It's a dream to return to the WTA Top 10. Doing it as a mother means so much to me," she said.

At the top of the rankings, Aryna Sabalenka and Iga Swiatek remain first and second respectively, while Australian Open champion Elena Rybakina climbed to third, rounding out another reshuffle at the summit of women's tennis.

Gianni Infantino's Russia ban remarks spark anger in Kyiv

BENGALURU

FIFA president Gianni Infantino's recent comments suggesting that the ban on Russian teams has "not achieved anything" have triggered sharply contrasting reactions, drawing praise from the Kremlin while provoking strong condemnation from Ukraine amid the ongoing war.

Russian clubs and the national team have been suspended from FIFA and UEFA competitions since February 2022, following Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Infantino's remarks, reopened debate on the future of that ban and immediately became politically charged.

The Kremlin welcomed the FIFA chief's words, calling them a step in the right direction. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Russia hoped that its footballers' "rights would be fully restored" and that discussions on the country's return to international competitions would eventually take place within FIFA. "It's high time to think about this," Peskov said, adding that Russian football should not remain isolated indefinitely.

Ukraine reacted with anger, describing Infantino's comments as deeply inappropriate during an active war. Sports Minister Matviy Bidnyi labelled the remarks "irresponsible" and "infantile," stressing that more than 650 Ukrainian athletes and coaches have been killed since the invasion began. "The ban must remain as long as Russians continue to kill Ukrainians," Ukrainian officials said.

Arsenal vs Chelsea: Late Havertz strike sinks former club

Arsenal's dream season continues as Havertz seals Wembley date with winner

LONDON

Arsenal's increasingly memorable season will now include a return to Wembley Stadium after Kai Havertz struck deep into stoppage time to sink former club Chelsea and send the Gunners into the English League Cup final.

Havertz's late goal secured a 1-0 win in the semifinal second leg at the Emirates Stadium, completing a 4-2 aggregate victory over Chelsea. Arsenal will face either Manchester City or Newcastle United in the final on March 22, with City holding a 2-0 advantage ahead of the second leg.

The victory adds another milestone to a campaign that has seen Mikel Arteta's side lead the Premier League by six points, top the Champions League standings with eight straight wins, and advance to the fourth round of the FA Cup. Arsenal have not lifted a major trophy since winning the FA Cup in 2020.

"The last few years we've been close but not quite good enough," midfielder Declan Rice said. "This season we've got that extra fire to go one step further in every competition. Reaching a final with this club is special."

Havertz, who played for Chelsea from 2020 to 2023, delivered the decisive moment after coming on as a 69th-minute substitute. Latching onto Rice's pass on the counter, the German rounded goalkeeper Robert Sanchez and calmly slotted home with virtually the last kick of a tense and scrappy contest.

Chelsea had adopted a cautious approach early on, content to soak up pressure and remain in the tie. Late introductions of Cole Palmer and Brazilian winger Estevao added intent, but Arsenal's resolute defence restricted the visitors to long-range efforts and set-piece threats.

Arsenal are chasing a third League Cup title after triumphs in 1987 and 1993, having finished runners-up six times. Victory would mark Arteta's second trophy as manager and further validate the club's steady rise after several painful near-misses in recent seasons.

Manu Bhaker to test preparation at Asian Shooting Championships

BENGALURU

Indian shooting star Manu Bhaker will get an early opportunity to assess her preparations for a demanding season when she competes at the Asian Rifle/Pistol Championships. The continental event will see a strong Indian contingent of 24 senior shooters in action on home turf.

With major competitions such as the Asian Games, World Championships and Olympic quota events lined up this year, the championships assume added significance for India's shooters. The squad has been selected purely on merit following rigorous selection trials, with past international performances also taken into account to gauge readiness for the season ahead. All eyes will be on Bhaker, the double Paris Olympics medallist, who is keen to build consistency after a relatively quiet post-Olympic phase. Apart from a silver medal in the 10m air pistol at the Cairo World Cup, the 23-year-old has had limited individual success in recent months but remains upbeat.

"The end goal for me is the 2028 Olympics," Bhaker said during a virtual media interaction.

Yuki Bhambri scripts Indian tennis history, enters ATP doubles Top 20

NEW DELHI

Yuki Bhambri etched his name into Indian tennis history by becoming only the second Indian after Rohan Bopanna to break into the ATP men's doubles Top 20, underlining his steady rise among the world's elite doubles specialists.

Bhambri achieved the milestone following a strong run at the Australian Open, where he partnered Sweden's Andre Goransson to reach the third round. The performance earned him crucial ranking points, lifting him from No. 22 into the Top 20 and making him the first Indian men's doubles player since Bopanna to reach the landmark.

The Indo-Swedish pair showed impressive form in Melbourne. They began their campaign with a straight-sets win over Australian wildcards James Duckworth and Cruz Hewitt before producing a spirited comeback in the second round to defeat the experienced duo of Santiago Gonzalez of Mexico and David Pel of the Netherlands. Though their run ended in the third round, the consistency displayed across matches proved enough to propel Bhambri into the elite bracket.

Bhambri's ascent has been the result of sustained performances over the past year. In 2025, he reached the US Open semifinals alongside New Zealand's Michael Venus, narrowly missing out on a maiden Grand Slam final after a closely fought loss to Neal Skupski and Joe Salisbury. Earlier in the season, he claimed his first ATP 500 title at the Dubai Tennis Championships with Alexei Popyrin, saving multiple match points in a dramatic final.

Last year also saw Bhambri rise to become India's No. 1 doubles player, ending Bopanna's long reign at the top of the national charts. Training out of the Roundglass Tennis Academy, the 33-year-old has reinvented his career by focusing on doubles after injury setbacks earlier in his singles journey.

With his confidence high, Bhambri is now set to compete in ATP 500 events in the Middle East before turning his attention to national duty. He is expected to play a key role for India in the upcoming Davis Cup tie against the Netherlands, carrying both form and history into the contest.

Asian Ch'ship: Pistol shooter Esha Singh clinches gold, Samrat settles for bronze

NEW DELHI

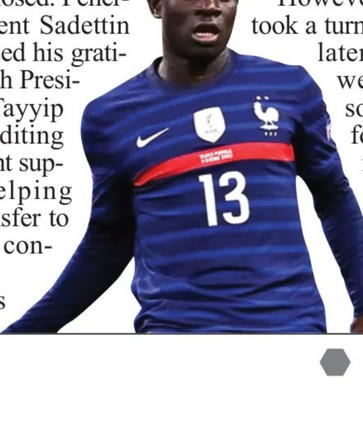
Olympian Esha Singh carried her rich vein of form into the new season, clinching the women's 10m air pistol gold as India enjoyed a strong start on the opening day of the Asian Championship (rifle/pistol) here on Wednesday, while reigning world champion Samrat Rana had to be content with a bronze in the men's event.

The 21-year-old Esha produced a composed display under pressure to finish atop the podium with a score of 239.8 in the final. She came from behind to fend off a stiff challenge from Chinese Taipei shooters Cheng Yen-Ching (235.4), who took silver, and Yu Ai-Wen (217.7), the bronze medallist. India's Suruchi Singh also featured prominently before finishing fourth.

Esha's latest triumph marked her second individual senior Asian Championship gold, adding to the title she won in Jakarta in 2024 at just 19. The Hyderabad shooter had ended last season on a high as well, winning the ISSF World Cup Final gold in Ningbo, China.

Teenager Suruchi, who had led the final after the first 10 shots, slipped during the elimination stages, while double Paris Olympics bronze medallist Manu Bhaker finished seventh in the eight-shooter final. Despite fluctuating scores across the field, Esha held her nerve with a series of high 10s to surge ahead when it mattered most.

In qualification, Suruchi topped the Indian contingent with 576, while Manu and Esha both shot 575. The trio later combined to win the team gold with an aggregate of 1,726, ahead of Vietnam and Chinese Taipei. In the men's 10m air pistol, Samrat Rana, gold medallist at last year's World Championships, showed promise after finishing second in qualification with 581.



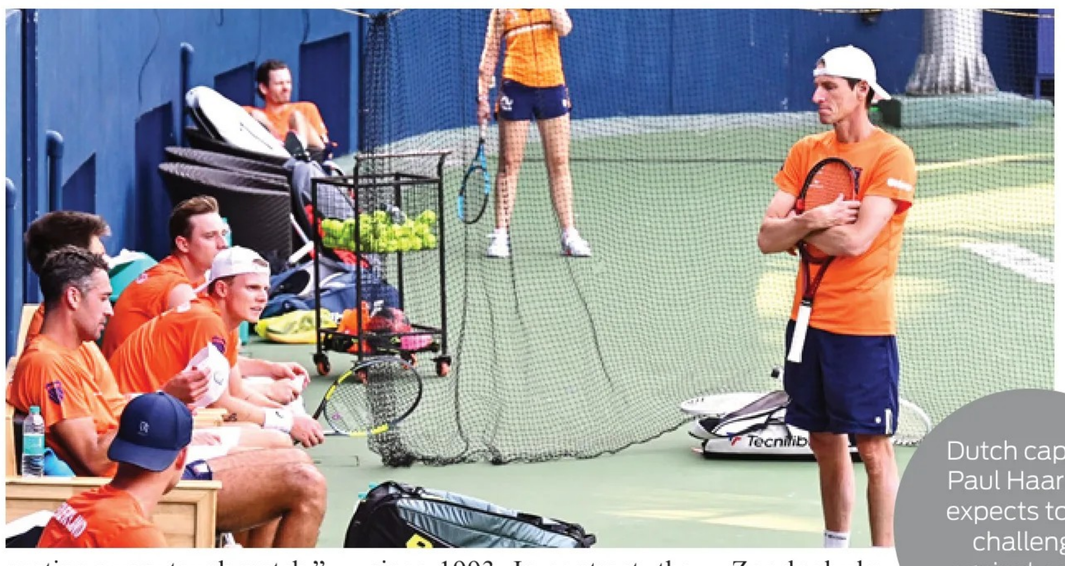
Indian tennis stars 'going to be strong' in Davis Cup: Haarhuis

BENGALURU

India's Davis Cup team will pose a serious challenge in the Qualifiers first-round tie this weekend, Netherlands captain Paul Haarhuis said, praising the home side's recent form and resilience. The two teams face off at the SM Krishna Tennis Stadium, with a place in the World Group at stake.

The Dutch squad arrived in Bengaluru and took stock of the venue as India continued its practice sessions. Haarhuis, a former world No. 1 doubles player and six-time Grand Slam champion, was impressed by the conditions and the intensity of the Indian camp.

"It's an important match for both teams," Haarhuis said. "Everybody wants to be in the next round in September. The Indians have played well to get here, and they're going to be strong opponents. I'm expecting a very tough match."



Dutch captain Paul Haarhuis expects tough challenge against confident Indian side

India enter the tie high on confidence after a memorable 3-1 win over ninth-seeded Switzerland in a World Group I encounter, a result that marked their first victory over a European side in Europe since 1993. In contrast, the Netherlands suffered a 1-3 loss to Argentina in September 2025, making this tie crucial for their campaign.

Despite missing their top two singles players — Tallon Griekspoor and Botic van de Zandschulp — the Netherlands remain optimistic. Haarhuis explained that scheduling conflicts, including the ATP 500 event in Rotterdam next week, influenced their absence. "Tennis is an individual sport. Players decide their schedules. Of course, I want my best players, but we respect their choices," he said.

Jesper de Jong, ranked 88, will lead the Dutch singles charge, supported by 23-year-old Guy den Ouden. Experienced doubles players David Pel and Sander Arends are expected to anchor the pairing. Haarhuis noted that arriving four days early would help his team adjust to local conditions. "The focus is on our strengths," he said, while keeping a close watch on the Indian players during practice. Meanwhile, India received a boost as Sumit Nagal returned to training, with the team management hopeful he will be match-ready despite a recent hip strain.

Midfielder N'Golo Kanté joins Fenerbahce after transfer delay

ISTANBUL

Fenerbahce has completed the signing of World Cup-winning midfielder N'Golo Kanté after administrative issues briefly threatened to derail his move to the Turkish club, ending days of uncertainty surrounding the high-profile transfer.

The Istanbul giants confirmed Kanté's arrival on Wednesday, though the financial terms of the deal were not disclosed. Fenerbahce president Sadettin Saran expressed his gratitude to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, crediting his "significant support" in helping bring the transfer to a successful conclusion.

Kanté joins Fenerbahce from Saudi Pro League side Al-Ittihad, where he had been playing since moving there in 2023. The deal appeared close to collapse earlier this week when Fenerbahce publicly blamed Al-Ittihad for administrative errors that initially prevented the transfer from being completed. The Turkish club had suggested on Tuesday that the move was off due to delays in paperwork from the Saudi side.

However, the situation took a turn when Al-Ittihad later posted a farewell message on social media platform X, confirming that it had agreed "to sell the remaining period" of Kanté's contract.

Stats-driven job: Dhoni explains why commentary doesn't appeal

Former India captain MS Dhoni says commentary demands statistical mastery and delicate judgement

NEW DELHI

Former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has virtually ruled out a stint in the commentary box, describing the role as a demanding and delicate job that relies heavily on statistics — an area he admits is not his strength.

The 44-year-old, who led India to three ICC titles, has largely stayed away from public cricket discussions since retiring from international cricket in 2020. His association with the game is now primarily through the Indian Premier League, where he continues to turn out for Chennai Super Kings.

Speaking during a YouTube interaction, Dhoni said commentary involves walking a very fine line between describing the game and unintentionally criticising players.

"Commentary is very difficult. There is a very thin line between describing the game and getting into a zone where you start criticising individuals," Dhoni said. "Often, you don't even realise that what you are saying may be borderline wrong."

Dhoni explained that good commentary requires the skill to explain why a team is struggling without making individuals feel targeted. "If the team is losing, there are reasons behind it, and you need to describe those reasons without anybody feeling bad. That is the art of commentary," he added.

Apart from the sensitivity involved, Dhoni said his inability to memorise statistics, including his own numbers, puts him at a disadvantage. "I'm not good with stats. There are people who know stats about players from every era. If you ask me about my own stats, I'll have to think," he admitted.

The former wicketkeeper-batter also spoke about his approach to advice, both in cricket and life, saying he prefers listening over speaking. "I'm a very good listener. If I don't know about a topic, I don't speak much because I absorb more by listening," he said.

With a smile, Dhoni also confessed that one thing he still struggles with is phone conversations. "I like to sit across and speak to people. I'm very awkward on the phone," he joked, adding that he is "glad" he hasn't improved much in that department.

Australia look to ward off injury concerns for strong T20 WC show

BENGALURU

Genuine contenders in the latest edition of the T20 World Cup, Australia face a stiff challenge in overcoming injury worries and key absences as they attempt to reclaim the title they last won in 2021.

The Australians have enjoyed a strong run in T20 internationals since the 2024 World Cup, winning 17 of their 21 matches. However, that momentum took a hit during their recent tour of Pakistan, where they were whitewashed 3-0, underlining the difficulties of playing in Asian conditions. While their overall record now stands at 17 wins and seven losses from 24 games, concerns around squad balance loom larger than form.

The bowling attack has been hit the hardest. Mitchell Starc's retirement from T20Is has deprived Australia of an experienced left-arm spearhead, while captain Pat Cummins will miss the tournament after failing to recover fully from a back injury. Josh Hazlewood, another frontline pacer, is also racing against time due to an Achilles niggle and may miss the early matches.

Though bowlers like Nathan Ellis, Ben Dwarshuis and Xavier Bartlett offer depth, they lack the experience and intimidation factor of the absent trio. Spin, however, appears better covered with Adam Zampa leading the attack, supported by Glenn Maxwell, Matt Kuhnemann and Cooper Connolly.

CRICKET
AUSTRALIA
Australia enter T20 World Cup battling injuries, retirements, and demanding subcontinental conditions.

Australia's batting, in contrast, looks well settled. Travis Head headlines a powerful lineup that includes Mitchell Marsh, Maxwell, Tim David, Cameron Green, Josh Inglis and Marcus Stoinis, all of whom have experience in subcontinental conditions through the IPL. Their ability to counter spin, especially at Pallekele, could define Australia's campaign.

Placed in Group B alongside Sri Lanka, Ireland, Zimbabwe and Oman, Australia will play all league matches in Colombo and Pallekele. With spin-friendly conditions expected, particularly against Sri Lanka, the road to the Super Eight will demand depth, adaptability and the big-match temperament that has long defined Australian cricket.

RCB eye second crown, DC aim to break jinx as WPL set for thrilling finale

VADODARA

Royal Challengers Bengaluru will look to claim their second Women's Premier League title and draw level with Mumbai Indians, while Delhi Capitals aim to finally break their finals jinx when the tournament's two most entertaining sides clash in the summit showdown here on Thursday.

Under Smriti Mandhana's leadership, former champions RCB have enjoyed a dream run this season, repeatedly showcasing resilience and the ability to bounce back under pressure. That character was evident early on as they became the first team in WPL history to begin a campaign with five consecutive wins.

RCB's strength has been their knack for producing match-winners at crucial moments. Australian star Grace Harris rediscovered her touch with a blistering 75 against UP Warriorz, while Gautami Naik's impressive 73 against Gujarat Giants powered a commanding victory in the playoffs. Though Mandhana, Harris, Georgia Voll and Richa Ghosh have not always been consistent, timely contributions have often proved decisive.

The bowling unit has risen to the occasion as well. Nadine de Klerk has been outstanding, picking up 15 wickets to sit third on the season charts, while Shreyanka Patil's five-wicket haul against Gujarat underlined RCB's spin strength. With pace support from Sayali Satghare, Mandhana's side looks well-rounded heading into the final.

Delhi Capitals, meanwhile, will be desperate to shed their unwanted record of finishing runners-up in all three previous editions. Now led by Jemimah Rodrigues, the Capitals have leaned heavily on a potent bowling attack spearheaded by Chinelle Henry and the impressive Nandani Sharma, who has taken 16 wickets this season.

Delhi's batting has also begun to click at the right time. Lizelle Lee and Shafali Verma forged a crucial partnership in the Eliminator, while Laura Wolvaardt has been a pillar of consistency throughout the campaign. With a strong South African core lending cohesion and experience, Delhi will hope the fourth time proves lucky, while RCB seek to reinforce their status as a WPL powerhouse in what promises to be a high-quality finale.

MS Dhoni says fitness and performance, not age, should decide careers

Dhoni backs 'Ro-Ko' to continue, calls India a dangerous force at T20 WC

NEW DELHI

Former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has strongly backed senior batters Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli to continue their international careers, insisting that age should never be the deciding factor as long as players remain fit and perform consistently. He also tipped India as one of the most dangerous sides heading into the upcoming T20 World Cup, which will be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

Speaking during an interaction facilitated, Dhoni initially responded with humour when asked about Rohit and Kohli's potential participation in future World Cups. But he soon adopted a firm tone, questioning why anyone should dictate when a player must stop.

"For me, age is not a criterion. Performance and fitness are," Dhoni said. "Nobody should be told anything. Everyone should be treated the same way. If you are performing and you are fit, you should keep playing."

The 44-year-old, who continues to feature in the IPL for Chennai Super Kings, stressed the irreplaceable value of experience. According to Dhoni, true experience comes only after prolonged exposure to pressure situations, something younger players cannot acquire overnight.

"You can't get experienced people easily. A player becomes experienced only after handling pressure consistently over many games," he said, adding that a balanced mix of youth and experience is crucial for sustained success.

With India head coach Gautam Gambhir remaining non-committal on the future of Rohit and Kohli, Dhoni reiterated that selection should be straightforward. "Perform and stay fit, you play. Don't perform or aren't fit, you're out. There should be no special cases."

Turning his attention to the T20 World Cup, Dhoni said India possess all the ingredients of a champion side under Suryakumar Yadav's leadership. However, he cautioned against the impact of dew during evening matches.

"It's one of the most dangerous teams," Dhoni said. "My only worry is dew. It changes everything and makes the toss very crucial. If injuries are avoided and players fulfil their roles, India will be extremely hard to beat."

SAI faces shrinking coach pool as numbers dip sharply in six months

CHENNAI

With India set to host the Commonwealth Games in 2030 and pushing for the 2036 Olympics, worrying cracks are emerging in the country's sporting ecosystem. The Sports Authority of India (SAI), the government's flagship body for sports development, is grappling with an acute and worsening shortage of coaches.

According to data shared in a Lok Sabha reply during the 2026 Budget Session, the total number of coaches across SAI centres has fallen from 860 in July last year to 788 — a decline of 72 in just six months. The overall shortage has now risen to 48 per cent, up from 45 per cent, despite repeated recruitment drives.

The situation is particularly alarming at the elite level. The number of High Performance Coaches (HPCs) has dropped by nearly 50 per cent, from 15 in July 2025 to just eight currently, against around 50 sanctioned posts.

PSL move offers Steve Smith route back to T20 reckoning

MELBOURNE

Veteran Australia batter Steve Smith has signed with new Pakistan Super League franchise Sialkot Stallionz after being overlooked for Australia's T20 World Cup squad, a move aimed at reviving his short-format career and pushing for a national recall.

Despite impressive performances in recent months, including a productive Ashes series and a strong Big Bash League campaign with Sydney Sixers, Smith failed to make the cut for the T20 World Cup to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from February 7. The omission has come as a surprise to many, given his form and experience.

According to a report, Smith has become the first player signed by the Stallionz, one of the two new franchises introduced in the PSL for the 2026 season. The addition of Sialkot Stallionz and Hyderabad Kingsmen takes the total number of teams in the league to eight.

The 36-year-old has been open about managing his career on a day-to-day basis but remains ambitious. Smith has previously stated his desire to be part of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, where cricket will make its return in the T20 format, making continued exposure in franchise leagues a key part of his plans.

Sialkot Stallionz have appointed former Australia Test captain and current Australia 'A' coach Tim Paine as their head coach, lending the franchise a strong Australian influence. Hyderabad Kingsmen, meanwhile, will be coached by former fast bowler Jason Gillespie.

The PSL will conduct its first-ever player auction on February 11. However, Smith has been secured as a "direct signing", with each franchise permitted to rope in one player ahead of the draft.

Smith enjoyed a solid BBL season, scoring 299 runs in six innings for Sydney Sixers, underlining his continuing value in the shortest format. A successful stint in the PSL could strengthen his case for a T20I comeback, especially with Australia entering a transitional phase in the format.

Indian women dominate Myanmar in Asia Team Championships opener

QINGDAO

Defending champions India made a commanding start to their title defence at the Badminton Asia Team Championships, outclassing Myanmar 5-0 in their opening Group Y tie here on Wednesday.

India set the tone early through Tanvi Sharma, who needed just 32 minutes to get past Thet Htar Thuzar 21-13, 21-16 in the first singles. Sharma controlled the rallies with assurance and rarely allowed her opponent to settle, giving India an early advantage.

Rakshitha Sree Santhosh Ramraj then doubled the lead with a dominant display

against Eaint Chit Phoo. Showing composure and consistency, Rakshitha cruised to a 21-12, 21-6 win, keeping the pressure firmly on Myanmar and pushing India closer to an unassailable lead.

The tie was sealed by Malvika Bansod in the third singles. Up against Lin Lin Htet, Bansod displayed maturity at crucial moments, especially in a closely contested first game, before closing out the match 21-19, 21-12 to ensure India's victory.

With the result already decided, the Indian doubles pairs continued the one-sided affair. Priya Konjengbam and Shruti Mishra maintained India's dominance by defeating Su Latt and Thet Htar Thuzar 21-15, 21-16 in the first doubles encounter.

The experienced duo of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand then wrapped up proceedings in emphatic fashion. The pair hardly broke a sweat as they brushed aside the combination of Htet and Phoo 21-8, 21-6, underlining India's depth and balance across singles and doubles.

White coats, thin wallets: Why India's cricket umpires are struggling to stay afloat

CHENNAI

From the outside, umpiring in Indian cricket appears a respectable and reasonably paid profession. The reality on the ground, however, tells a very different story, especially for officials operating at the state and domestic levels.

Sudhir Rao (name changed), a state-level umpire, takes leave from his regular job to officiate in inter-district matches. For nearly seven hours on the field, he earns about ₹3,000 a day. While that may seem fair, the catch lies in the number of days he actually gets work. Many umpires struggle to officiate even 40 days in a year, pushing their annual earnings to a modest ₹1–1.5 lakh, often offset further by salary cuts from their primary employment.

In recent years, umpiring has attracted many former cricketers, aided by BCCI policies that favour ex-players through relaxed qualification pathways. This influx, however, has not been matched by an increase in domestic matches. The result is a surplus of umpires sharing the same limited pool of games, sharply reducing individual earnings.

Earlier, umpiring was viable largely because officials held government jobs that offered security and pensions. That safety net has nearly vanished, with government employment becoming scarce. While pensions exist, they are limited to umpires who officiated internationally before 2006, leaving most current officials without long-term financial assurance.

City Hilights (English Daily) published by P. Sunil Kumar (Publisher) on behalf of Immaculate Broadcasting Consortium World News (P) Ltd., No. 18, JRV Court, Queens's Road, Bengaluru – 560001 and printed at Manipal Media Network Limited Opp. Govt School, Kempalinganahalli, Near Kunigal Cross, Nelamangala TQ, Bangalore Rural Dist. -562123, Printed at No-7/2 plot no.CA-3/1,28(p)&29(p) Kapanoor 2nd Stage Industrial Area Kapnoor Village Kalaburagi -585104. Printed at S. J. R. V. Printers, No. 208 Plot No. B-019 KSSIDC Industrial Area, Irfan Ahamed Khan Pathan, 4th Main Road Gamanagatti, Hubballi-Dharwad – 580025. and Elegant Offset Printers Pvt. Ltd. No. 5-61/1, Shed No. M-6, Yeyyadi Industrial Estate, Yeyyadi, Mangalore - 575 008. (RNI No: KARENG / 2015 / 63243), Regd. No. BGGPO-2581/2017-2019 Posted at Bengaluru PSO-560026 Email - cityhilights.news@gmail.com Phone: 080-41209042. Copyright. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.